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THE SPIDER AND  
THE FLY . . . .

ALSO AN ATTRIBUTED INTER-  
LUDE, ENTITLED . . . .

GENTLENESS AND  
NOBILITY . . . .

BY JOHN HEYWOOD



# Early English Dramatists

*The Spider and the Fly*

TOGETHER WITH AN ATTRIBUTED INTERLUDE  
ENTITLED

*Gentleness and Nobility*

BY

# JOHN HEYWOOD

EDITED BY

JOHN S. FARMER

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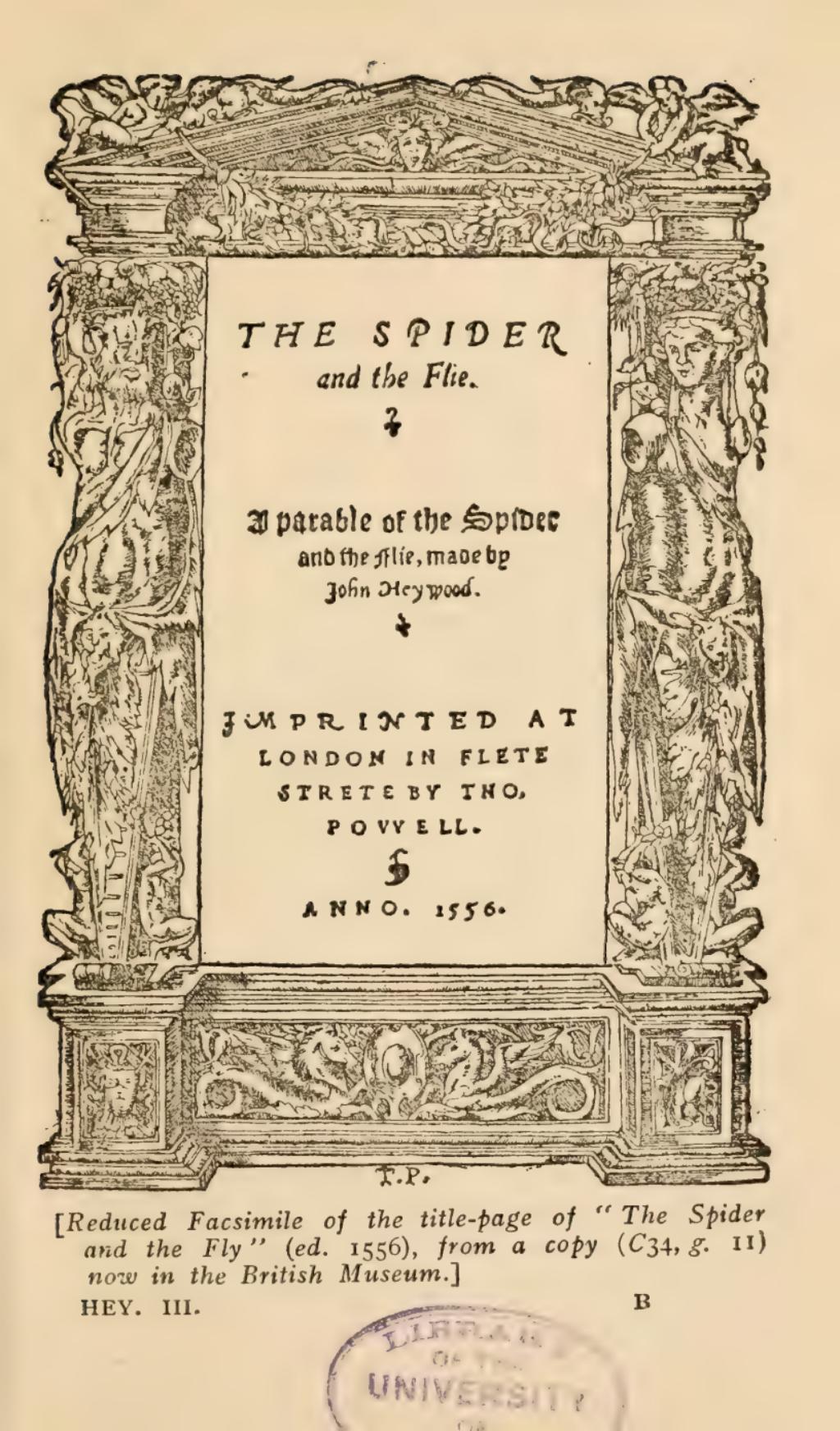


## PREFATORY NOTE

WITH the present volume is completed the text of the first and only collected edition of the known and attributed writings of John Heywood, "the father of English comedy." The glossaries attached to the first two volumes will more than suffice for all reasonable requirements in respect to such matters in the present one. It had, however, been hoped that it would have been possible to include a biographical sketch, together with other points of interest and concern connected with John Heywood, but all reasonable limits of space have already been largely exceeded. Moreover, on other grounds it is wiser to defer such a monograph pending investigations now in progress, but which are proving to have barely commenced. It is a gratifying fact that at length the much-desired materials for an intelligent biography of John Heywood are gradually being collected. New facts are being brought to light; fresh dates are being fixed,

and others hitherto problematical verified; whilst, most important of all, new avenues of research are being opened up and suggested. I hope in due course to publish a volume dealing, to better purpose than has hitherto been possible, with John Heywood's life, times, and writings. Due notice will be given to the subscribers to the Early English Drama Society's edition of Heywood's *Works*.

JOHN S. FARMER.



# THE SPIDER and the Fly.

2

A parable of the Spide  
and the flie, made by  
John Heywood.

3

IMPRINTED AT  
LONDON IN FLETE  
STRETE BY THO.  
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ANNO. 1556.

[Reduced Facsimile of the title-page of "The Spider and the Fly" (ed. 1556), from a copy (C34, g. 11) now in the British Museum.]

HEY. III.

B





[Reduced Facsimile of the woodcut portrait of John Heywood, forming a frontispiece to "The Spider and the Fly."]



## [THE SPIDER AND THE FLY]

### THE PREFACE

[*A.i.r.*]



Parable is properly one thing  
That of another doth conceiving  
bring. [scanned,  
Yea (oftentimes) as parables are  
One score of things by one be  
understand.

Each one of all, scanned and used well,  
May teach the scanner good to take and tell.  
Contrarily, scanned and used ill,  
Like ill likewise the fruit amounteth until.  
Wherfore, before entrance to scanning here,  
In present parable here to appear,  
First to induct (for to conduct) the way,  
How readers and scanners readily may  
Right scanning (in right reading) here pur-  
chase. [case.

Good readers ! read and scan (rightly) this  
There chanced at once, at one fair glass to be,  
Themselves t'attire at once, fair women three.  
Where one another envied till all were dressed,  
Who might (when all were dressed) seem  
dressed best.

But, in the time of trimming of their gear,  
Their foreheads striking up, broiding their hair,  
Lacing and laying it, with everything,  
Looked in the glass, directing trim trimming.

In all this time these women everyone  
 Beheld each other, but themselves not one  
 That in the glass upon herself cast eye,  
 Good or ill tiring (in herself) t'espie.  
 One hair lay low, one other lay too high,  
 On this side, or on that side, clean awry.  
 But hereupon, when each had other espied,  
 In tire attired, all awry or wide,  
 Lord ! in all three what inward sport there was,

[A.ii.v.]

Each one to see another in that glass !  
 All three sore swelled : but be it best or worst,  
 Twain must vent upward straight, or both must  
 burst.

While Margaret went aside, her pins to set,  
 Marian and Margery back they both get  
 To touch th'attire, of Margaret thus worn,  
 Between them twain to laugh that third to  
 scorn.

Marion said to Margery : See you not  
 How Meg is dressed ? Yes, Madge (quoth she)  
 God wot

Might not a beetle, blind beast, bring to pass,  
 To dress herself as well at any glass ?

Yes, Madge ; and with one eye I can now see  
 What spots (unseen to her) in her face be.

Yea, Moll (quoth Madge), I think I should ill  
 hie me,

To dress myself so ill, the glass so nigh me.  
 God hath done his part : she hath a good face,  
 Which gift of God herself doth ill disgrace.

Marion at this stepping from Margery,  
 Margaret to Margery stepped by and by.  
 And straight of Marion Margaret falleth in  
 hand,  
 How far from frame Marion's attire doth stand,

Madge and Meg finding fault at Marion more  
Than Madge and Marion found at Meg before.  
The third course was that Madge did start  
aside,

Wherewith Marion to Meg hastily hied,  
And Margery's attire they set abroach,  
As ill or worse (the worse her to reproach),  
Than she was tired indeed. Thus all these  
three,

Divided thrice in twain, did thrice agree,  
Each twain, the third to mock and jest upon,

[A.iii.r.

Till every one had mocked every one.

Each mocking other's fault, they faulty all,  
Each mocker's mock most on herself did fall.

This done, one of these three to the glass went,  
No face but hers then being represent;

Where, when she did herself only behold,

Her silent sight her fore folly so told

That, marking first herself, herself she attired,  
And then the rest, (in their attire) desired

That each upon herself would set sure eye,  
Ere she cast eye on other, low or high.

They doing so, all were attiréd so,

That whether apart, or they together go,  
Had they been willing, they had been unable

Spark or speck to spy discommendable

Each in other's attire. Which women and  
glass

Are a glass this book and readers to compass,  
In scanning sense to touch men in this book.

As glass lookers looked, if book readers look,  
He upon him, and he on him, to scan

Since most and best, nay most and worst they  
can,

Scanning who is the spider, who the fly,

Neither of either to himself t'apply;  
 Scanning no whit, by scanning here to see,  
 In case spiders, in case flies, all scanned may  
 be,

Glass looking and book reading, in such wise  
 May well be scanned one like vain exercise.  
 Who that this parable doth thus define,  
 This parable thus is his and not mine.

To this, this one thing I must mind you to  
 mind,

[A.iii.v.]

Concerning spiders, flies, and eke th'ants' kind.  
 Where I their natural operation  
 With the largest enlarge, t'enlarge foundation  
 Wheron I frame this top story, here to see  
 As both, both in length and breadth, may most  
 agree,

[and wide.]

This (for this cause) stretched the more long  
 I pray you bear with me, where it is spied  
 Wherein my fault may seem somewhat the less,  
 That wiser men than I (in like process),  
 Have done the like: and late, one wise and old  
 In an old book did read (as he me told),  
 That whensoever spiders, flies, and ants speak,  
 Their appropriate properties they likewise  
 break.

Which if themselves do ye will grant, I hope,  
 That I (doing it for them) may have like scope.  
 Thus wishing wishingly, in reading this,  
 Readers to read and scan all sentences  
 As we first mark and mend ourselves, and then  
 To mark, to mend, the faults of other men,  
 Without more scanning here. I now herein  
 End circumstance the substance to begin.

FINIS.

[*The tail-piece on p. 38 is here given in  
 original.*]



## THE TABLE

[A.iv.r.]

THE Introduction to the matter, showing  
how the fly chanced to fall in the spider's  
cobweb. *Cap. primu*

¶The lamentation of the fly, with declaration  
(partly) of the property of Fortune, and of his  
own estate past and present. *Cap. 2.*

¶The dreadful wonder of the spider, at sudden  
shaking of his cobweb. *Cap. 3.*

¶The spider, taking comfort, entereth in quarrel  
with the fly. *Cap. 4.*

¶The spider starting into his house to comfort  
his household, the fly deviseth what way to  
escape the danger of the spider. *Cap. 5.*

¶The spider being returned to the fly, after a  
few words between them had, the fly sueth to  
the spider to be heard speak, which he  
granteth. *Cap. 6.*

¶The oration of the fly to the spider, com-  
mending justice, and just justicers, requiring  
to have his cause heard thoroughly and ad-  
judged justly. *Cap. 7.*

¶The spider granteth the fly both to hear and  
adjudge this case, as may most agreeably stand  
with reason, law, custom, and conscience.  
*Cap. 8.*

¶They stand both in hope to convince each

other by just cause, the fly praying the spider's pardon of such rude speech and all behaviour, as he may chance to overshoot himself in, the which the spider doth grant. *Cap. 9.*

¶They enter into the principal argument. The fly supposing no lawful proof by witness of any ill there against him, the spider allegeth the contrary. The fly (upon occasion), requiring to be bailed under surety, the spider denieth it. *Cap. 10.*

[*A.iv.v.*]

¶The spider chargeth the fly, first with burglary, which the fly answereth unto: then the spider chargeth him with single felony, which the fly reasoneth unto. *Cap. 11.*

¶The spider (in a manner) granteth that the fly came into the cobweb against the fly's own will; which the spider so granteth, for such policy forthwith appearing as seemeth to weigh sore against the fly. *Cap. 12.*

¶The fly herewith is abashed, but anon he gathereth himself to a stay, showing a reason that maketh a manifest show clearly to overthrow the spider's foresaid policy. *Cap. 13.*

¶The spider checketh the fly for his comparing above the spider in knowledge of law and custom, which the fly maintaineth by one reason commonly reported. Whereupon the spider, perceiving the policy for which he seemed to grant the fly to come against his will taketh little or no place, that much weakening his part, he driveth the fly to draw back that grant. *Cap. 14.*

¶They reason afresh to try whether the fly came into the spider's cobweb with or against his will. *Cap. 15.*

¶They continue in pursuit of trial whether the fly came thither willingly or unwillingly so far, that the fly at length offereth to take a book oath that he came against his will. *Cap. 16.*

¶The spider not admitting the fly to his oath, the fly bringeth in the strength of the affirmative for his part, against the negative on the spider's side. Whereunto adjoined his other reasons laid in discharge of charge past, he hopeth, according to justice promised, to be straight discharged. *Cap. 17.*

¶The spider, upon a case in law touching the affirmative, taketh hold to detain the fly still in possession, but yet under [B.i.r.] promise of justice before promised. *Cap. 18.*

¶The spider, seeing that he cannot take full hold of the fly in case of burglary nor felony, he chargeth him now with trespass, to which the fly reasoneth. *Cap. 19.*

¶The spider (at the fly's answering him to a question) chargeth the fly with procuring of other flies to disturb him in his cobwebs, which the fly denieth. *Cap. 20.*

¶They fall in comparison touching their evidence written or unwritten. Whereunto the fly layeth prescription of custom, which he before (alleged), supposing thereby, that the spider ought both to deliver him and make him amends. *Cap. 21.*

¶The spider denieth the fly's description of custom, alleging the saying of ancient spiders for his interest by custom. Wherein anon both showing each to give small credit to other, the fly moveth to put the matter in arbitrament, which (as yet), the spider doth not grant.

*Cap. 21.*

¶The fly (after a few words concerning appeal) doth briefly recapitulate the effect passed in the principal case. Cap. 23.

¶The spider putteth a case in appeal ill (in appearance) for the fly, as the spider draweth it, and anon he by example of the lord's will had in courts of copyhold, seeming to lean toward will, the fly laboureth to qualify that will. Cap. 24.

¶The fly claimeth all holes in all windows to be flies' in freehold, and that spiders should build by the sides or in the tops. Which case to be tried by law or custom, they in manner agree: but the fly moving it to be tried at the common law, the spider refuseth it, whereupon ariseth matter of digression [B.i.v.], in which the fly commendeth the spider for expedite hearing hereof, briefly defining the properties of justice, mercy, and tyranny. Cap. 25.

¶The fly (for cause here appearing) desireth to repeat his distinction of justice, mercy, and tyranny, which the spider denieth. Wherewith the fly layeth to the spider breach of promise made to him before. In discharge whereof, the spider answereth. Cap. 26.

¶The spider (reducing the fly to the principal matter) moveth the trial to be had in his own lordship, which the fly misliketh. Whereon ensueth a glance at the diversity of government, between one spider and twelve flies. Cap. 27.

¶They agree to be tried by arbitrament, whether all or how many holes in all windows belong to spiders, and how many to flies, the spider choosing for his part the ant or pismire, the fly choosing for his side the butterfly. Whereupon they, th'one couple in one part, and

th'other couple in another part, talk together forthwith. *Cap. 28.*

¶The spider to the ant, and fly to butterfly (after words of greeting) declare that they are chosen their arbiters herein, wherein the ant and butterfly promise to do their best. And they then anon draw all four together in (or at) the cobweb. *Cap. 29.*

¶The spider declareth, and the fly granteth the issue to be, that all flies claim (in freehold) all holes in all windows to be theirs by custom. And spiders claim all holes with all parts of all windows to be their freehold by custom. And after talk between them therein had, the ant requireth full instruction of the two parties to them two arbiters. *Cap. 30.*

¶They (in couples separate again) declare each how he would [B.ii.r.] have his arbiter handle his part. And first is here told the tale of the spider to the ant. *Cap. 31.*

¶The tale of the fly to the butterfly how he shall use the fly's part. Which done, the arbiters withdraw themselves toward the top of the window. *Cap. 32.*

¶The ant and the butterfly met together in the top of the window, certain spiders on their one side, and certain flies on their other side. Th'arbiters command them to stand back while they two talk together. *Cap. 33.*

¶Th'ant declaring the cause of that meeting, the spiders and flies acknowledging the same, and that they come to give evidence, the flies are appointed to depart while the spiders first show what they can say for their part. *Cap. 34.*

¶After a few words between the ant and the butterfly, one spider, as might be for all, de-

clareth to those two th'arbiters all evidence that all spiders for their part can devise. And that done, the spiders are commanded away, and the flies bidden to approach. *Cap. 35.*

¶Upon a short talk between the arbiters, one fly, spokesfly for all flies, discloseth all evidence for their part. Wherewith the flies at commandment depart aside. *Cap. 36.*

¶The arbiters (in debating th'evidence on both parts given) cannot otherwise agree, but that the same weigheth even as much for the t'one part as for the t'other. At end whereof, they call again all the said sort. *Cap. 37.*

¶The ant sheweth to them all that th'evidence weigheth to one effect on both sides, so that all resteth now upon knowledge which part to credit most. And upon that motion, one spider and one fly fall in argument to try the same, wherein is touched (partly) the properties of credence, worship, and honesty, they agreeing that credence standeth upon [B.ii.v.] honesty, as thus—as every spider or fly is honest, so is he credible. Which talk ended, they are all again sequestered. *Cap. 38.*

¶By th'ant's provocation the butterfly repeateth th'argument before made in his gross terms, not far from full. And they twain seeming to agree upon the point herein, they command the spiders and flies back again. *Cap. 39.*

¶Th'ant telleth them, that where th'evidence for both sides goeth to one effect, and that in debating which side is most credible to award the window unto, it is concluded that credence standeth upon honesty, and that as all spiders and flies are honest, so are they credible, now must it first be tried which side is most honest,

thereon to judge which side is most credible.

*Cap. 40.*

¶ One spider and one fly reasoning which side is most honest agreeing (in conclusion) that th'onesty on both sides appeareth to them two to be one, that fly requireth the arbiters to ponder the case as they shall think good.

*Cap. 41.*

¶ Th'arbiters commanding all to go apart again, they fall in talking somewhat at large touching both credence and honesty in both these sides. Which done, to show therein their minds, they call all before them again. *Cap. 42.*

¶ The ant telleth them that they two determine th'onesty on both sides to be one, willing them to go forth in the matter. Wherewith one tart taunting spider and one sharp saucy fly, forbearing till this time (with much pain) speaking or rather railing, stand now forth (upon tip toes) to chop logic each with other in rude reasoning of this case. *Cap. 43.*

¶ Where another spider and fly reasoned late before to prove which side of both is most honest, this said quarrelling spider and cocking fly labour to prove which part of both is most [B.iii.r.] dishonest in words and deeds, as by usurpation in windows and other misbehaviour. At end whereof infurious fumes, thence runneth the spider one way, and the fly flingeth another. *Cap. 44.*

¶ After a few words, which the ant speaketh to the rest of both sorts there, they are assigned to stand back again, while th'arbiters gather out of this railing such reasons as they can.

*Cap. 45.*

¶ Th'arbiters consider, in this said taunting talk,

that sundry dishonest abuses there are in sundry parties on both sides. Upon their agreement of conclusion wherein, they have before them those other spiders and flies again.

*Cap. 46.*

¶Th'ant declareth to those spiders and flies that the tales of the pert spider and fly, before told, do charge each other's part in such sort that they cannot say which side is most dishonest, but they two adjudge clearly, in dishonest things, both sides of like dishonesty. Wherewith they all avoided back again, th'arbiters talk to fall to appoint between themselves what report finally and fully to make. *Cap. 47.*  
 ¶Th'arbiters being agreed on their report, they call to them again the spiders and the flies.

*Cap. 48.*

¶Th'ant sheweth them that the butterfly and he are at point what to report, devising it to be reported before the head spider and the fly in the cobweb, the two principal parties, and to have with them, to hear and witness their report, two spiders and two flies, witty and discreet, and the rest to stay there till their return. Which being agreed, they set forth straight to the said cobweb. *Cap. 49.*

¶The ant associate with the said sort pronounceth at length (to the spider and fly in the cobweb) this brief effect:—That inasmuch as on both sides the evidence is one, and that the cre[B.iii.v.]dence is one, by th'onesty being one, they two can (in reason) no way try how to lay th'accustomed right more on th'one side than on th'other, they finally leave the case even at liberty as they found it. And so depart to the place of arbitrament again. *Cap. 50.*

¶Th'ant and butterfly set where they had sit, th'ant repeateth to those spiders and flies the report made by him at the said cobweb. At end whereof, the spiders and flies, seeing that time spent all in vain, each side among themselves fall in murmuring. *Cap. 51.*

¶Upon the spiders' and the flies' muttering murmuring, suddenly there come nigh about them a wonderful number of all manner of flies in their warlike manner. Whereat with twink of an eye (as it were) the head spider (with a great number of spiders) hath builded a strong castle in that cobweb, with ordnance and weapons and spiders ready in order of defence. *Cap. 52.*

¶This huge heap of flies light about th'arbiters, apprehending th'ant, casting a halter about his neck, drawing him to their tree of reformation (as they call it) to hang him straight. But at his suit to be heard speak ere he die, one fly fleeth into the tree, wherewith the captain commandeth silence. *Cap. 53.*

¶The fly in the tree, to persuade the flies to hear the ant speak, wadeth honestly, politically to allure them to quiet hearing of the ant before they put him to death. His which tale told, he removeth to his place again. *Cap. 54.*

¶The fly's former fine tale no whit stirreth the gross flies to the hearing of the ant. Whereupon the butterfly (that was an arbiter) fleeth into the tree, labouring the flies to have the ant heard speak ere he die. *Cap. 55. [B.iv.r.]*

¶The butterfly (to get th'ant to be heard) telleth his tale in such rude manner and matter that anon he setteth them all (well nigh) together by the ears. But upon his gross tale grossly

told, (much more liked than the fly's finer tale) they grant to hear the ant speak. *Cap. 56.*

¶ The ant prayeth to be heard speak thoroughly before any part of his tale be adjudged, and then they to adjudge the whole as standeth with equity, first alleging matter to clear himself from offending the flies, finally giving them (as it seemeth) friendly counsel, (touching this strife) grounded upon this common saying: Before thou ought begin, have an eye to the end. *Cap. 57.*

¶ Th'ant hath set the flies in such fear of the spiders, that most are ready to run away; whom to stay, the captain fly deviseth th'ant to set the spiders in like fear of them, by a tale told on the same ground that he told this, in pain of hanging at his return. *Cap. 58.*

¶ Th'ant, after entry in talk (before the head spider) he to him, and all the spiders (upon this said ground: Ere thou ought begin, have an eye to the end), inveigheth what he can to set the spiders in fear of the flies. *Cap. 59.*

¶ Th'ant, having brought the spiders in great fear of the multitude of flies, the head spider taking great displeasure with the ant for the same, he answereth th'ant's tale so that he bringeth all the spiders in courage again, giving (in his own name and all theirs) defiance to the flies. *Cap. 60.*

¶ Upon defiance given by the spider to the flies, the ant, brought again to the flies, maketh full report of all said at the cobweb. At end whereof, two flies argue whether th'ant have deserved life or death by keeping or breaking former commandment to bring the spiders in fear of the flies. *Cap. 61.*

¶At end of this last argument, the captain asking the ant what he can say why he should not die, the ant, after a few words, submitteth him to their order. Whereupon, the captain going to the question, the ant is condemned by the voice of the most number. The captain then willing him to make his last prayers, he doth so.

*Cap. 62.*

¶While the ant saith his prayers on the ladder, two flies, thinking him to be wrongfully cast away, pitying the case, they touch (in talk) three sorts of flies seen there then. Wherein is touched some part of properties of neuter flies.

*Cap. 63.*

¶The ant, having now made his prayers, being at point to be turned from the ladder, a fly, afar off, crieth "Hold." Who (lighting in the tree) bringeth such a message from the head spider, as the ant (thereby) is reprieved, and carried to prison.

*Cap. 64.*

¶The captain fly inveigheth upon matter before past in such sort so encouraging the flies again, that anon they all crying to the captain to march forward, they bravely set forth, and, laying their ordnance to the cobweb castle, they besiege it round.

*Cap. 65.*

¶The flies give onset in assault upon the castle, the spiders defending it in furious fight. And upon the slaughter on both sides, the flies retire to their camp, the spider's wife and children on knees to him beseeching him to take peace with the flies.

*Cap. 66.*

¶The spider, having compassion on his wife and children as on himself, he saith that he will, with the advice of his council, in their suit do all that may be done for the best.

*Cap. 67.*

¶ The spider, set with twelve of his council, declareth his wife's and children's suit (adjoining thereunto considerations of [C.i.r.] his own) for peace to be taken with the flies, requiring those councillors (while he depart and return) to determine what way he shall take.

Cap. 68.

¶ Straight as the spider is gone, the rest arise, withdrawing asunder in three plumps, four in a plump, no one knot knowing what the rest saith. Which done, they all set down again against the spider's return.

Cap. 69.

¶ The spider, set again with his council, in those three said sorts arise three divers ways to take herein, the best one whereof to choose, the spider departeth to devise upon, willing them to cause all corners of that castle to be cleansed and all battered places made strong again.

Cap. 70.

¶ The flies in camp be at council, desirously devising by what means to get peace best. Whereupon the captain inventing a means to drive the ant to sue for peace if they will be ruled by him, they thereunto agree. And thereupon the ant is brought before the flies.

Cap. 71.

¶ The captain telleth the ant that the flies have retired from th'assault, (where many spiders are slain) to see whether the spiders will sue for peace, for which since they sue not, the flies will assault them again. But the ant they will hang straight before they go.

Cap. 72.

¶ The ant, upon sudden short warning of his death being much dismayed, laying all that he can for his life, and yet can get no grace, he prayeth respite while he be brought to the

spider to see whether he will grow to any peace to save the ant's life. Which granted, the ant is brought before the spider. *Cap. 73.*  
¶Th'ant (in way of petition) suing to the spider for peace, laying considerations to provoke him the rather thereto, the spider doth attentively give the ant hearing. *Cap. 74.*

[*C.i.v.*]

¶The spider (upon th'ant's tale told to him) allegeth certain things by which he seemeth in doubt much to grant peace to the flies. Wherein the ant and he traversing somewhat, anon he granteth peace to them under condition expressed, wherewith th'ant is brought to the flies again. *Cap. 75.*

¶Th'ant declaring peace as it is granted, the flies in much joy set the ant thankfully at liberty, and home goeth he. Whereupon the captain commandeth all flies to draw near to hear him speak ere they depart. But they flee all away, a few except. *Cap. 76.*

¶Upon a little talk had between the captain and the few flies there left, touching the rudeness and lightness of the common sort of flies, misliking their former light lewd demeanour, they depart, the camps, on both sides, clear broken up. *Cap. 77.*

¶Th'ant, being come to the molehill, solemnly received of his wife and children and a great number of ants, he telleth to them all a tale discoursing th'effect of all his trouble had among the spiders and flies, willing them diligently to mark what he saith. *Cap. 78.*

¶Th'ant having said what he will say, willeth all ants to note why he said that he said. Which is to warn them by his harms to be-

ware how they meddle in matters between spiders and flies.

*Cap. 79.*

¶Four flies (in the name of all flies) at the cobweb, thanking the spider for pardon and peace, declaring the conditions and the performance on their part, sue to the spider on his part, to perform his grant, in laying out and possessing them of their limits with half the holes in the window, which he granteth, bidding them a little time stay, in which while he sendeth the youngest spider of his twain to the ant, praying him to come to him again to divide and [C.ii.r.] deliver the holes to the flies as the spider will appoint them. *Cap. 80.*

¶Upon this message done, th'ant feigneth a let of his coming by a hurt mischancing him that morning, with which answer the young spider returneth to the old.

*Cap. 81.*

¶The spider, after a few words to the four flies, assigneth to them all the small holes beneath, half the holes in number, but scant the fixed part of the room, at which they somewhat grudge. But they must take them or none.

*Cap. 82.*

¶The four flies flown thence, the spider to the fly in prison layeth: that in all kinds of trial that day on both parts laid, he thinketh his own part approved best, as he thinketh the fly would think were he a spider, contrary judgment whereof, the fly thinketh in the spider were he a fly. Whereupon they agree to change places (each for the time) to imagine and set forth other's part the best they can.

*Cap. 83.*

¶They having changed places, they allege each

for his dissembled side. Wherein the fly anon is so allured to pride and ambition in occupying (for the while) the spider's stately place, that he at last with an oath affirmeth that spiders are owners of all windows. The spider granting it true, stateth to the fly, seeming to take end upon the fly's own judgment. *Cap. 84.*

¶The fly out of that chair fallen flat before the spider, perceiving his oversight and danger therein, he declareth how change of place changed his affection. In discoursing of which case, he partly toucheth the commodity of adversity, and the discommodity of prosperity, beseeching the spider to relinquish all advantage therein to be taken against him. Which the spider granteth. *Cap. 85.*

¶The spider, upon a glance given at his desert of thanks to [C.ii.v.] be had at the fly's hand, allegeth custom to be his warrant to destroy the fly, which the fly cannot deny. Whereupon he desireth that the case may be reasoned in conscience, which the spider now granteth.

*Cap. 86.*

¶They both lay sundry sharp reasons in conscience for the spider's life and death. But the spider in conclusion draweth these four principles (reason, law, custom, and conscience, which he at beginning granteth to try all by) so to combine that he maketh thereby an appearance, to show the fly convinced. And straight by custom he giveth judgment of the fly's death. To which the fly yieldeth, praying to speak with twelve flies before he die. And it is granted. *Cap. 87.*

¶The fly (to twelve grave flies for all flies)

giveth his advice for avoiding the perils by their strife had in windows against spiders, the great ground of which tale standeth most upon consideration of these three things, wherefore they strive, with whom they strive, and how they strive.

*Cap. 88.*

¶As the spider is about to kill the fly, the maid of the house cometh in and striketh down the cobweb and the spider to the ground.

*Cap. 89.*

¶The maid being at point to tread the spider to death, the spider prayeth her to hear him speak ere he die, and then to adjudge him justly, the maid granting to use him (as he did use the fly) as may best stand with reason, law, custom, and conscience. She at his request (for the time) withdrawing her foot, they fall to reasoning of the case.

*Cap. 90.*

¶In reasoning of both sides, the maid driveth the spider to grant himself convinced (by custom aided with the other principles erst said) as he convinced and adjudged the fly before. Whereupon she (by custom) decreeth the spider to die, he then desiring to speak with his son and his counsel, which the maid granteth.

*Cap. 91.*

[C.iii.r.

¶The spider to his son and twelve spiders giveth his best advice for most quiet and best governance, his tale standing most upon these three terms—first a declaration of himself, second an exhortation to them, the third a submission for himself. Whereunto he desireth licence to take his child in his arms now at their departing, which the maid granteth.

*Cap. 92.*

¶After a few woeful words of the spider had to

his son (they both clasping each other in arms very naturally) he kisseth and blesseth him. Wherewith that son with all the twelve spiders dolefully depart from the spider. *Cap. 93.*

¶The maid (appearing as woe to destroy the spider as he is to be destroyed) with her foot presseth him to death. *Cap. 94.*

¶The maid hath before her the twelve spiders and the twelve flies that had been before in place. And upon her show that all harms done by those generations is grown by misorder, she finally deviseth full redress in pointing them to grow to order. *Cap. 95.*

¶The twelve spiders and twelve flies, having heard their order set by the maid, they thankfully receive it. And upon her commandment to them, to put this order in ure among all spiders and flies, they joyfully depart that commandment to fulfil. *Cap. 96.*

¶The spiders and flies being now absent, the maid sweepeth the window clean in every place as far as her broom and arm will stretch, which done she departeth. *Cap. 97.*

¶The maid being gone, the author cometh in. And upon his [C.iii.v.] beholding the window fair and clean swept, without any cumbrous cobwebs or excessive flocks of flies, he departeth. *Cap. 98.*

FINIS TABULÆ.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in original.*]

[On C.iv.r. in the original is repeated the portrait of the author which in the present volume is given on page 2 facing the preface.]



## [THE SPIDER AND THE FLY]

*The Introduction to the matter, showing how  
the fly chanced to fall in the spider's cobweb.*

*Cap. primū.*



[A.i.r.]



N season what time every growing  
thing,  
That ripeth by root, hath lively  
taken heart,  
Grass, leaf, and flower, in field  
so flourishing

That wintered withered stalks stand in covert;  
Though weary withered hearts play then like  
part,

Coverly couched in bed, themselves to hide,  
Yet hearts of lust the bed can not abide.

But up they must, proof of that lust to make:  
In which like cheerful time it chancéd me  
From sleep one night so timely to awake  
That how far night, or how nigh day might be,  
It passed my reach of search sure sign to see;  
But straight the search of nature wrought the  
crow

Of dawning of the day, warning to show.

Upon which admonition I arose;  
But by the time that I could get me out,  
The day appeareth and so broad breaketh loose,  
Leading mine eye at large to look about  
The fields so fresh, that be ye out of doubt,  
For savour, sight, and hearing each bird's  
voice,  
No change could chance to choose the better  
choice.

Which I (rejoicingly) heard and beheld  
Till such time as the sun was come in sight,  
So that the dew (drawn by his power) must  
yield [night;  
From th'earth to th'air, from whence it fell that  
And having herein had mine appetite,

I made return (temperately to remain)  
Out of hot sun to temperate house again.

Whereas (anon) a book I took in hand [A.i.v.  
Something to read, to fode forth fantasy,  
And stepping to a window, there to stand,  
In at a lattice hole, right suddenly,  
Even at a fling, fast flew there in a fly  
That sang as shrill and freshly in my mind  
As any bird could do, bred of that kind.

About the parlour flew this fly full round,  
And, as appeared, he sought for food indeed,  
But when in no wise aught would there be  
found,  
Into the buttery (hastily) he yede,  
And stole into the almery to feed,  
Where he (at pleasure) triumphed uncontrolled,  
Till he had there (at will) wrought what he  
would.

From whence (anon) courageously he flang  
Now here, now there, of wing he made no store,  
But for a fly, oh Lord ! how he than sang  
Two notes above his highest note before !  
Wherein, increased his courage more and more,  
He flew, he frisked, he tossed, he turned about,  
The fly of flies, no fly, I trow, so stout.

But as the firmament most clear and blue,  
The golden sunbeams bent to beautify,  
The curtain drawn of cloudy weeping hue  
Withdraweth, and changeth that crystal azure  
sky

From blue to black, so fareth it with the fly ;  
Amid whose joy, at window to have passed,

A cobweb masketh his wings and maketh him fast.

[A.ii.r.]

Thus chance hath (by exchange) the fly so trapped,

That suddenly he lost his liberty;  
The more he wrang, the faster was he wrapt,  
And all to th'increase of his jeopardy;  
Which peril, when he did conceive and see,  
Such was his rage in haste from thence to flit  
As made him seem well nigh out of his wit.

He wafted his wings, he wagged his tail,  
He shook his head, he frowned, he staréd wide,  
He spurned, he kicked, but when nought would avail

To rid him thence, but there he must abide,  
As breath and breast would bear, loudly he cried.

And, woefully as any one fly can,  
In following form this woeful fly began.



[A.ii.v.]

The lamentation of the fly, with declaration  
 (partly) of the property of Fortune, and of his  
 own estate past and present. Cap. 2.



[A.iii.r.]

**A** LAS, alas, alas and wellaway !  
 To cry aloud, alas ! what cause have I !  
 Alas (I say) that ever I saw this day !  
 My whole estate, in twinkling of an eye,  
 Is here transformed from mirth to misery ;  
 For froward fortune hath led my mishap  
 To lay and lock me in mine enemy's lap.

Oh sudden sorrow, from settled solace !  
 For so sat I in solace, as methought.  
 Oh fortune, false flatterer that ever was  
 In one moment, and in another wrought  
 So furious, that both th'effects forth brought,  
 Fury or flattery, which is worth in thee  
 Hard for a fly to judge the certainty.

Namely for me, who all my life have been  
 Lapped in lap of thy fair flattering flowers,  
 Till from those roses, now thou castest me  
 clean

Into these nettles of thy furious showers,  
 Wherein my lack of practice lacketh powers  
 (My whole time having been spent in the t'one)  
 To judge in these two, which is the worst one.

I lack (I mean) judgment to judge at full  
 Both these said sides ; howbeit here to declare  
 Somewhat in both parts, I both can and will ;  
 Mine entry now, in change from joy to care,  
 Hath in this instant taught me to compare  
 Flattery with fury, truth in both to try,  
 When Fortune telleth truth, and when Fortune  
 doth lie.

[A.iii.v.]

Who, while she was (or rather seemed) my  
 friend,

Th'appearance of her pleasant countenance  
 Promiséd me my wealth should have none end ;  
 But swifter than the star doth seem to glance  
 That assemblage turneth to dissemblance ;  
 Mine ended wealth, now turned to endless woe,  
 Amid 'mong her false flattery, proveth so.

And putting now her fury here in ure,  
 Threatening the danger of my life present,  
 Performance thereof doth appear as sure  
 As it in manner had experiment;  
 Her fury is a glass right excellent  
 Between fury and flattery to devise  
 To take her threats true, and her promise lies.

Flattery and fury thus in her this goes—  
 When she speaketh fair, then hath she lust to  
     lie; [disclose,  
 When she speaketh foul, then truth she will  
 Which thing showeth somewhat strange, but  
     commonly  
 In man to man, man's use doth verify,  
 In love and hate disclosing truth and lies,  
 The self show showed in daily exercise.

In sundry things experience doth tell  
 No friend with friend (in friendship) will be  
     plain,  
 As foe with foe will in his fury fell.  
 Love, to tell truth, doth oft for love refrain;  
 Hate hideth no jot untold for to remain.  
 Love locketh in truth, lest truth might friends  
     displease;  
 Hate lasheth out truth, foes to displease and  
     disease.

[A.iv.r.]

Friends (in this case) will hide truth, and show  
     lies; [truth;  
 Foes (in this case) will hide lies and show  
 Of truth that toucheth in unpleasant wise  
 Hate hideth nought that memory endueth;  
 In man, and fortune, who that fully vieweth  
 How use of truth and lies herein hath gone,  
 Shall see in both small difference save this one.

Love causeth friends to hide unpleasant truth,  
To keep their friends in quiet while they may;  
By love in friends to friends, a lothness  
grow'th

In thing extreme, the truth extreme to say;  
Where hiding of the truth harmeth no way,  
Or that the truth is better hid than told,  
There friend to friend by love will truth withhold.

But those respects fortune doth nought attend;  
Her hidden truth, in pleasant present show,  
Is to beguile such as on her depend,  
When from her grace their grief unknown shall  
grow

By fore-purposéd, following overthrow;  
In quiet calm, she shadoweth shipwreck rocks,  
To make her mariners her mocking stocks.

And noting here (from her proclaiméd calm)  
How suddenly her stolen storms do arise  
Of joy long sought, late had, the sudden qualm  
I judge to be her great joy to devise;  
By her which joy, my sorrow in this wise,  
Teacheth me (I say) to say that I have said,  
And so much more as is next after laid.

[A.iv.v.]

What is long liking life, the time once past,  
Except the same have been orderly spent?  
Th'accounted audit day must come at last,  
When word, and deed, with thought of each  
intent,  
Shall have a just account with like judgment.  
Would God, for all which dreadful doubtful  
doubts,  
That I had died even in my swaddling clouts.

For live we never so long a time here,  
 The time determined once that hence must we,  
 Then doth all worldly pleasure past appear,  
 Even as indeed it is, all vanity ;  
 Which pleasure hath been long possessed in  
     me,  
 I think in no creature living more  
 That ever livéd here, a fly before.

Full many a night have I escapéd harm,  
 When many a fly to harm was bought and sold,  
 And many a night have I lain close and warm  
 When many a fly abroad hath died for cold ;  
 And many a fly the flap hath jobbed and jolled,  
 When I have safely kept from jeopardy,  
 Myself and all the flies that followed me.

Whereby (with flies) I was then so esteemed  
 That few things passed without my counsel,  
 And where I passed there was no danger  
     deemed,

Nor no cause why, for in all things that fell  
 My work did then approve my wit so well  
 That no whit caréd I what fly did know it,  
 Nor yet how far or broad all flies did blow it.

[*B.i.r.*]

I have been (ere this day) these many days,  
 By mine experience and mother wit,  
 Highly in estimation many ways,  
 And where I was present, no fly would sit,  
 Nor pertly press, to blow or bite one bit  
 Till I were set ; for where were flesh or fish,  
 The choice of both was mine in every dish.

And I suppose as long as present tense  
 May keep possessed possession peaceably,  
 To stand in place and case of reverence

Is thing much pleasant to all flies well nigh;  
 But once in changéd case as now am I,  
 The preter tense presently taking place,  
 Then hath the present tense lost all his grace.

Alas ! my joyful joy of yesterday,  
 How can it cure my careful care present?  
 Of pleasure past, remembrance doth alway  
 The pinch of present pain right much augment ;  
 Then in this present case this consequent,  
 Concludeth (I say) all pleasure past to be  
 Nought else but vanishéd vain vanity.

Thus lieth there now in charge of my repreef,  
 Those things which I have long time gloried in,  
 Which glory past, increaseth present grief ;  
 And as my worthy wit did worship win,  
 So shall show of my folly never blin  
 To bruit defame, report of his distress  
 Shall toss and turn my wit to foolishness,

[B.i v.]

As thus, the simplest fly which by my school  
 Is taught (ere this) of cobwebs to beware,  
 And seeth his master play so far the fool  
 To be myself now tripped in the same snare,  
 Shall by report my folly full declare,  
 Which surely shall among all flies survive  
 As long as any one fly is alive.

And though this fall I take to be as clean  
 Without my fault, as without remedy,  
 And patience the medicinable mean  
 To take all faultless falls rejoicingly,  
 And eke where no help helpeth malady  
 To make a virtue of necessity,  
 Yet those two points are points too high for me.

For be I faulty, or be I faultless,  
 Since I this dreadful danger must endure,  
 I am not mortified to bear distress,  
 And being clear remediless from cure  
 Of all my pains, that putteth most pain in ure  
 From step to step stretched on this straining  
     stair,  
 No step like that straineth danger of despair.

For whereas if remedy anywhere,  
 Hope (out of hand) should set me there about,  
 As hope of help is drowned, so I forbear  
 All diligence that hence might help me out;  
 Thus though the cagéd bird (with stomach stout  
 And voice right sweet) can sing his songs by  
     rote,  
 Yet can the fettered fly so sing no note.

[*B.ii.r.*

Example of myself, whose weeping eyes,  
 With sobbing sighing heart bewaileth my pain,  
 Appearing such, by ought I can surmise,  
 As doth (in manner) show my death certain;  
 Namely, if so the spider now remain  
 In this his mansion, set here presently,  
 Then dread I, doubtless, here forthwith to die

Of such a death as most abhorreth us flies,  
 Which flies have felt and folk have seen too  
 Of property the spider hath the guise [plain;  
 First to suck out and so eat up our brain  
 To his small gain and our most loss and pain.  
 Thus hath it been, thus it is, and thus shall be,  
 Till pity may mitigate th'extremity.

[*The tailpiece as on page 28 is here given in  
 the original.]*

[B.ii.v.]

*The dreadful wonder of the spider at sudden  
shaking of his cobweb.*

Cap. 3.



[B.iii.r.]

WHAT time the fly this to himself had said,  
About the house he cast a doleful look,  
Wherewith (to break away) he made abraid  
With such a thrust that all the cobweb shook ;  
At which the spider start, and straight awoke  
Out of sound sleep, full fast trembling for fear,  
And faintly spake (anon) as ye shall hear.

Alas ! where am I? Alas ! whence came I?  
Or whither shall I? What's this? An earth-  
quake?

Or cometh the day of doom now suddenly?  
Nought else (I trow) but that my house could  
make

In every place to shatter and to shake.

What is this buzzing blumbering, trow we?  
thunder?

Hold, house ! alas ! my ceiling riveth asunder.

No part hath rest in all parts of this frame,  
From roof to groundsill, within any room.

Is it the devil? or is it our dame?

Or is it the page? or is it the groom?

Or is it our maid with her birchen broom?

Between the devil and all these, last and first,  
The devil take me if I can choose the worst.

But ill, worse and worst, devil, and all to-  
gether

Do me assault as it (to me) doth seem;

Hath fortune wrought my foes at this time  
hither,

And not so much as warned me to misdeem?

Now fie on fickle fortune thus extreme,

And I defy the guard of such a guider !

Alas (this day) I am but a dead spider.

[B.iii.v.]

These words thus spoken, down anon he sank,  
Kneeling awhile devoutly on his knee,  
And then, round on a heap, to ground he  
shrank,

Like an urchin under an apple tree;

No felon, fast in fetters for his fee,

Nor ape in chain, that ever looked more pale  
Than looked this spider, after this told tale.

So that these twain stand now in one estate,  
For in like languor both be now here led,  
And of their lives both like desperate;  
For now the spider is as far in dread,  
And by that dread he is even as near dead,  
As is the fly, who thinketh he seeth at eye  
His death approaching him apparently.



The spider, taking comfort, entereth in  
 quarrel with the fly. [B.iv.r.  
 Cap. 4.]



[B.iv.v.]  
 Howbeit, anon the spider well espied  
 That enemies were there none save only one,  
 And him he saw so safe and surely tied,  
 That up he stood to stretch him, and anon  
 (His former fear from him now being gone)  
 To the top of his cobweb he stept boldly,  
 And in these words began to common coldly.

Who are you that lieth there? speak, if you can?

Forsooth (said then the fly), sir, it is I.  
 I? be you I? (quoth he) I pray you then  
 What I be you? tell me that by and by.  
 What I am I? forsooth, sir, a poor fly.  
 What! thou false thief, art thou here? quoth  
 the spider,  
 Thou shalt feel cause to wish thou hadst gone  
 wider.

And therewithal full furiously he flang  
 Toward the fly, but what time he espied him,  
 Oh lord! how hisfeat feet and hands he  
 wrang,  
 Beseeching his great God that day to guide him,  
 And from his mortal enemy to divide him:  
 Without whose aid, from which his foe to flit,  
 He saw it past a fly's poor power and wit.

And his dreadful despair was much the more  
 To see how speedily the spider span  
 All round about his house each side to shore;  
 • No weaving workman in this world that can  
 Weave that like web of that like stuff woven  
 than.

In each weak place is woven a weaving cast,  
 Byward, inward, toward the fly more fast.

[C.i.r.]

Which done, these words the spider sourly said,  
 Thou ancient enemy and arrant thief,  
 Whose lineage always hath showed banner  
 'splayed

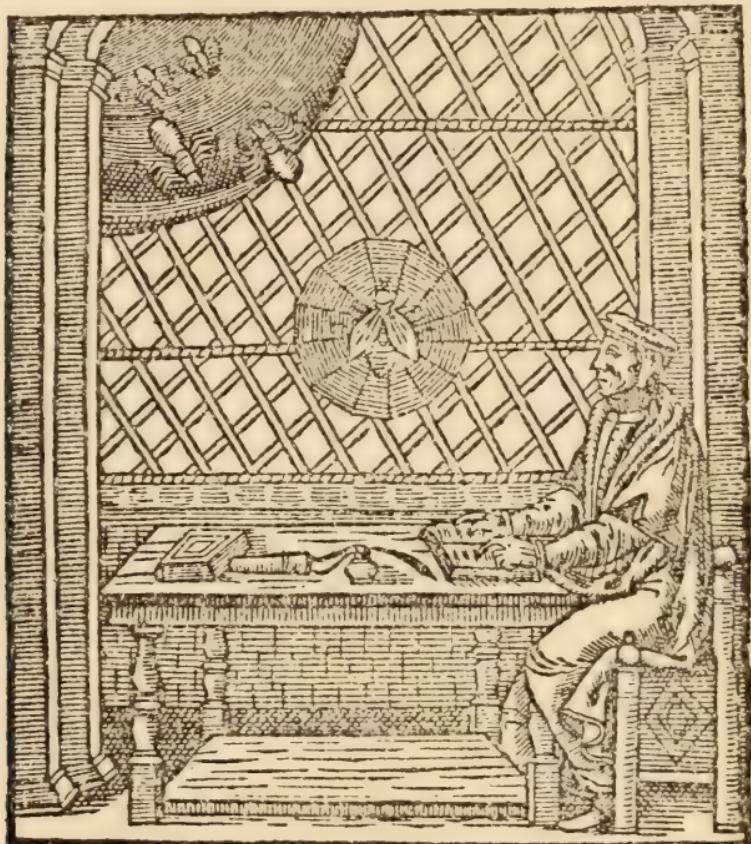
Against my parentage, to their great grief;  
 And now thyself, renewing their mischief  
 With malice of thine own in ure to put,  
 Art stolen into my house, my throat to cut.

And never had my house and household harm  
By any fly, so much as now by thee.  
I shrew thy naked heart ! I was full warm,  
Naked abed, asleep so mote I thee.  
Thereas my wife and all my children be ;  
Where God knoweth what they do, or how they  
do, [to.  
By fear which thou at this time bringest them



[C.i.v.]

*The spider starting into his house to comfort his household, the fly deviseth what way to escape the danger of the spider.* Cap. 5.



[C.ii.r.]

AND with these words aside the spider  
start [were,  
Where his said bedfellow and offspring  
Saying these words : Now, good my own sweet-  
heart,  
And my two babes, be ye all of good cheer.  
The present cause of all your present fear  
Is past; I have the caitiff fast in snare  
That was the cause of all your fearful care.

What whoreson is it, husband? (Quoth he)  
Wife,

A flesh fly as big as a humble bee,  
That shall (if I live) surely lose his life.  
The youngest spider there, at this cried he,  
Oh, father, father, I heartily pray ye,  
Remember when ye shall return again  
To bring me some part of that flesh fly's brain.

How say ye to this babe? (quoth the mother)  
Will ye hear this urchin of eight weeks old?  
It is a babbling brat above all other.

Yea (quoth the father), child, hardly be bold.  
Thorns prick young that shall be sharp, folk  
have told;

Which showeth in thee, in that thou art inclined  
To crave (thus young) according to thy kind.

And while the spider dallied in this wise,  
The fly (considering this extremity)  
Did with himself advisedly devise,  
To 'scape with life, what might his best means  
be;

Softly, as I might hear, saying, I see  
Like as much contention can nought prevail,  
So to much cowardice might all quail.

[C.ii.v.]

Between these two, cowardice and contention,  
The spider's ire the rather to assuage,  
I temperately must temper mine invention,  
To plead my right in reason, not in rage.  
And since my body lieth in jail for gage,  
My jailor fair and gently to beseech;  
That is (in flies) no flattery but fair speech.

From desperate fear hope maketh me now suppose,  
If I may obtain hearing reasonably,  
I neither life nor liberty shall lose,  
But be let loose from bondage by and by.  
And hereupon the spider, suddenly  
From where he was, returnéd back again,  
And straight to gripe the fly began to strain,



[C.iii.r.]

The spider being returned to the fly, after a few words between them had, the fly sueth to the spider to be heard speak, which he granteth.

Cap. 6.



[C.iii.v]

THE fly (to him) lift up both heart and hands,  
And, in most mild behaviour humbly,  
Said : Sir, since I am bound here in your bands,  
Under commandment thus assuredly,  
What bruit might breed to you more infamy  
Than here (in hucker mucker) me to murder,  
The cause wherefore I die published no further.

Fly (quoth the spider), I dare say the cause  
 Is open enough, for a thousand mark  
 Will not repair that which, against all laws,  
 Thou hast here broken. Behold thine own  
 work,

Wherein to answer all that at me bark,  
 To whom thy doleful death shall be apparent;  
 To them thy devilish deed shall be my warrant.

Sir (said the fly), if it indeed so be  
 That this my deed apparently appear  
 So far my fault that it may warrant ye  
 To give me death therefore with conscious  
 clear;

Then as my body is in prison here,  
 So with my body yield my will, will I,  
 Unto your will, at will to live or die.

But, sir, before we shall be so far forth,  
 I you beseech right humbly as I may,  
 Allow my suit for such and so much worth,  
 To win your grant (ere I be cast away)  
 To hear what I can in this matter say.  
 So thou with speed show what thou hast to  
 break,

I (quoth the spider) grant to hear thee speak.

[C.iv.r.]

I thank you humbly (quoth the fly), but, sir,  
 Of a goose with garlick sauced so late I eat,  
 That my breath stinketh, and since I may not  
 stir

From you, for you I think it very meet  
 To step from me aloof to air more sweet.

The spider stepping back a little way,  
 The fly therewith (somewhat lightened) did say.

[*The tailpiece as on page 44 is here given in  
 the original.*]

[C.iv.v.]

*The oration of the fly to the spider, commanding justice, and just justicers, requiring to have his cause heard thoroughly and adjudged justly.*

Cap. 7.



[D.i.r.]

MASTER spider, note (I beseech you)  
this :

Ye know right well the virtue of justice  
In every creature here living is,  
Both in you spiders, and eke in us flies,  
And in every other wight being wise,  
The thing which is generally pretended,  
And, where it is in deed, highly commended :

And where that virtue lacketh in any wight,  
 All other virtues there do bid adieu;  
 What virtue can (in place) take place of right,  
 In such as to show justice to eschew?  
 Who lacketh justice, he cannot be true;  
 And who in judging all things, justly judgeth,  
 To choose that judge his judge, no wise wight  
 grudgeth.

Great lets wherein are four—love, hate, meed,  
 and dread,  
 In all which judgments given, adjudging gains,  
 Love judgeth the loved more than justice  
 sheweth decreed,  
 Hate judgeth the hated less than justice con-  
 strains:  
 Meed judgeth the meeder more than justice  
 contains,  
 Dread, in dread of the dreaded the dreader  
 drives [trives.  
 To judge, more or less, as the dreaded con-  
 And t'avoid partial judgment between parties,  
 Though th'one party for judge, I wish none of  
 them,  
 Yet change of mind or matter doth oft so rise,  
 That the judge is judge and party one of them;  
 As you seem judge here, being the tone of  
 them,  
 Self love in which judge, he th'other part  
 hating, [rating:  
 May judge much judgment of much unjust  
 [D.i.v.  
 Yea, though the judge hate th'other party no  
 deal, [enough,  
 That self judge, himself loving more than  
 Less right than enough, th'other part may soon  
 feel;

Self love, to himself tender, to the rest tough,  
Is of just justice neither root, branch, nor  
bough.

Love (namely self love) corruptibly growing,  
Is chief lodestar of lets in justice showing.

For though corrupt love and hate, contraries  
mere, [linked,  
Work one like wrong, both in one like degree  
Yet that love worse than that hate I adjudge  
here;

It is more hard love to ourselves to extinct,  
Than hate to other to pluck from the heart's  
precinct;

Thus of justice no let leadeth interruption,  
Like this love (named self love) grown of cor-  
ruption.

But to the point: judges that justice use  
In all, between themselves and all the rest,  
To claim or hold by will who doth refuse  
Things whereof they would be or be possessed;  
And even as justice justly hath addressed,  
Both give and take the due extended rate,  
Those are (for judgment) worthy most estate.

Since justice that sweet flower full fair doth  
grow

In persons such as of most base sort be,  
That flower more fair and sweet must needly  
show

In those that stand above the mean degree,  
Being thereto knit unto authority;  
As more or less who may command at will,  
So more or less he may do good or ill.

[D.ii.r.]

And in our case, were just justice clean reject,  
What injuries might thereby here arise !  
Of flies' facts, if spiders' wills weighed,  
th'effect

Right soon might wilful will, without justice,  
Draw unto death a hundred thousand flies,  
Which will may do (if will shall knit the knot)  
Whether that we flies offend or offend not.

Howbeit, I hope ye will do justice, such  
As may with this just justice join justly ;  
In mine account your wisdom is too much  
To blot or blur your fame for any fly ;  
Whereby I stand in trust assuredly  
Just judgment in this matter now to have,  
And other thing than that I do none crave.

Save that this case may be first fully heard,  
And fully perceived by reasoning likewise,  
Which done, as equity best afterward  
Shall you advise my judgment to devise,  
Without further appeal in enterprise,  
I shall (as I say) either to live or die,  
Into your hands yield me contentedly.



[D.ii.v.]

**T**he spider granteth the fly both to hear and adjudge this case, as may most agreeably stand with Reason, Law, Custom, and Conscience.

Cap. 8.



[D.iii.r.]

**F**LY (quoth the spider) I espy right well  
Thy brain is much, which I right much set  
by,  
By which thy present suit, the truth to tell,  
Thou shovest here wittily and honestly,  
Request wherein shoveth such conveniency,  
Full hearing and reasoning to win me to,  
That reason biddeth me grant, and so I do.

And for the rest, behold me now (quoth he);  
Wherewith his feet to his mouth he tosses,  
Saying these words: Now, fly, here unto thee  
I swear a solemn oath, by all these crosses,  
Thou shalt have justice, though I sustain  
losses,

As reasonably may stand, for thy defence,  
In reason, law, custom, and conscience.

In compass of which four principles touched,  
All debates discoursed and discussed should  
be;

Reason, to perceive man's great ground is  
vouched;

Law on reason must take ground to agree;  
Custom standeth (or should) on reason's de-  
cree; [draw  
Conscience with reason concurreth to with-  
Th'extremities of custom and of law.

Upon these four, each one one corner post,  
The stinting of debate taketh standing stay,  
Whereon this building shall be so embossed,  
That, as I swear, again I swear, I say,  
Without corruption on my part, this day,  
Thou shalt be used herein at my hand  
As most with reason and this rest may stand.

[D.iii.v.]

**T**hey stand both in hope to convince each other by just cause, the fly praying the spider's pardon of such rude speech, and all behaviour as he may chance to overshoot himself in, the which the spider doth grant.

Cap. 9.



[D.iv.r.]

**T**HERE never was friar limiter that ducked  
So low, where begging won him twenty cheeses,  
As is the fly now to the spider rucked;

He maketh him sure to win, whoever leses ;  
 And here withal (by chance) the spider sneezes.  
 Now (quoth the fly) chance I to win or lese,  
 Christ help, and long in health well mote ye  
 sneeze.

The spider herefore gave the fly such thank  
 As hath in usage, course of courtesy ;  
 But note these twain, so lately so like blank  
 And both now in like mirth immediately ;  
 Methought that chancéd very prettily ;  
 The fly thinketh reason shall sure make his  
 way ;

The spider thinketh in reason surely nay.

Sir (quoth the fly), I must you here beseech  
 To ratify your pardon my protection  
 In my behaviour, namely in such speech  
 As may (by rudeness) rightly crave correction ;  
 If I shall lack your aid to this election  
 Then may my reasoning for my liberty  
 Lose my liberty, and win my jeopardy.

This is included, fly, in my sworn oath  
 By which I erst have promised thee justice ;  
 Such speech as in thy case directly goeth,  
 So that thou rail not too far out of size,  
 For which thou seemest a fly as far too wise,  
 Spare not to speak thy mind, and unto me  
 (So said) say what thou wilt : I pardon thee.

[D. iv. v.]

That pardon I receive with hearty heart,  
 And heartily thank your granting of the same ;  
 The shell now of this nut shelled clear apart,  
 The cracking of this nut, to put in frame,  
 For winning of the kernel of this game,  
 To your pardon had, your patience praying,  
 To hear for further searching, further saying.

Here stood they both, awhile in silent stay,  
The fly devising warily what to speak;  
The spider likewise warily watched at bay  
What great words out of his mouth, small and weak,  
Of challenge to defence should there then break.

Wherewith at courtesy, low and reverent,  
From circumstance to substance the fly went.



[E.i.r.]  
 ¶They enter into the principal argument, the fly supposing no lawful proof by witness of any ill there against him, the spider allegeth the contrary. The fly (upon occasion) requiring to be bailed under surety, the spider denieth it.

Cap. 10.



[E.i.v.]

MASTER spider, the pith now to advance,  
 I pray you declare plainly (quoth the fly),  
 How can (by law) in reason this mischance  
 Support in you—to keep me cruelly  
 To lie in prison here thus piteously,  
 And with your fetters fettering me thus fast,  
 No lawful proof of cause by witness past?

No lawful proof? (quoth he) fly, sayst thou so?  
 What proof can reason show in law more clear  
 Than sight of him that one inch cannot go  
 From present place, where plainly doth appear  
 Such an act done as thou hast now done here?  
 I think the falsest fly of all thy kin  
 Would judge for heinous thy thus breaking in.

But put the case, that I attachedé you,  
 In this my lordship, fast in jail to sit  
 But as suspect, no act approvéd now,  
 Yet might I keep ye fast, lest ye might flit,  
 Till ye were found guilty, or else acquit,  
 Except this case run right, and law runneth  
     wrong,  
 For this is law, and law it hath been long.

Keep (quoth the fly) I pray you, in suspense  
 The first allegéd case of these last twain,  
 Till in this last law lay experience;  
 Whereby it may appear ye may detain  
 A fly suspect of crime, not provéd plain;  
 But under surety, out of common jail,  
 The prisoner shall at suit be let to bail.

[E.ii.r.]

Let flies to bail? friend fly (quoth the spider)  
 Nay, by my father's soul, that will not be,  
 Except he here will be such a bider  
 That he will sit fast by the feet for thee  
 And take thy turn: him will I take surety.  
 Nay (quoth the fly) that trieth a friend too  
     much;  
 I have good friends, but sure I have none such.

To bind a fly herein, body for body,  
Were bond sufficient for a thing thus slight.  
Well (quoth the spider) fly, call thou me noddy  
Except I prove this a thing of much weight.  
But thou alluredst me in way of receipt  
Of one fly here, now fastened fast in jail,  
To go lay salt on another fly's tail.



[E.ii.v.]

The spider chargeth the fly, first with burglary, which the fly answereth unto; then the spider chargeth him with single felony, which the fly reasoneth unto.

Cap. II.



[E.iii.r.]

THIS reason driveth us now (quoth the fly)  
Straight to your reason, before suspended,  
Wherein mine act, appearing evidently  
So huge, and heinous offence commenced,  
As by that reason it is pretended,  
Then law and reason both will that I fail,  
Of light surety, to borrow me to bail.

But in mine act apparently committed,  
 Although the deed I no whit do deny,  
 Yet how can law, by any wight well witted,  
 Lay in my fault offensive fact thereby?  
 Fly (quoth the spider) that can (and will) I,  
 And thy reproach, to broach forthwith at large,  
 I lay (in law) burglary to thy charge.

That charge is soon dischargedé, sir, said he;  
 The breach of houses in the time of night  
 Showeth evidence where those offenders be.  
 But not only the sun doth shine full bright  
 Ere flies a mornings come abroad in sight,  
 But also at eve, ere the sun be set,  
 Each fly to his lodging again will get.

By this, this breach can be no burglary,  
 And ere I now came here all men might see  
 The sun appearing universally.  
 Though it (at thy coming) were day with thee,  
 Yet was it night (quoth the spider) with me;  
 I was asleep, and no day yet had seen  
 These two long hours, had not this mischance  
 been.

[E.iii.v.]

Sir (quoth the fly) admit that ye now were  
 Asleep, till that the sun were six hours high,  
 Could any reason show reason to bear  
 You to affirm, or firmly verify,  
 The day for night, till time ye day espy?  
 So were it a thing easy to be done,  
 With a wink, to make it midnight at noon.

Why, fly, at noon? midnight is it with me  
 If I at noon be asleep. Yea (quoth the fly)  
 But if ye against one noon-sleeper shall see  
 Ten thousand noon-wakers, night from noon to  
 try,

Ye shall poorly prove this night noon burglary.  
And slept ye till noon, yet in course of the sun,  
Ye are not ignorant how the day doth run.

Well said (said the spider) and put the case,  
That I in this case yield thee the mastery ;  
Yet shall this other case (I trow) take place.  
I here arrest thee, fly, of felony,  
Which cause of arrest thou canst not deny ;  
For breaking in here thus, and never knock,  
As good or better, were to pick the lock.

I brake into this house now (quoth the fly)  
Like as a thief doth break into Newgate,  
Saving that the thief doth most commonly  
Pretend at his entry there more estate ;  
For break a thief in there, early or late,  
He hath as many leaders as a bride,  
With waiters, attendant on every side.

[E. iv.r.]

And yet no thief is there of all the rout  
That into that house breaketh so willingly,  
But he would rather go ten mile about  
To shun the vanity of vain glory,  
Then be received so honourably,  
Accounting his life no day the shorter  
In taking pain to be his own porter.

And as the thief, full far against his will,  
Doth break in there, so break I now in here,  
For thief or fly, what one hath wit so ill  
To press to rob where he hath knowledge clear  
By robbery to steal ought, nought can appear ?  
Nor no commodity there consequent  
But death or perpetual prisonment.

[*The tailpiece as on page 28 is here given in  
the original.*]

[E.iv.v.]

**T**he spider (in a manner) granteth that the fly came into the cobweb against the fly's own will, which the spider so granteth, for such policy forthwith appearing as seemeth to weigh sore against the fly.

Cap. 12.



[F.i.r.]

So mote I thee, good fellow fly (said he)  
 That allegation reacheth here, so far and near,  
 That in appearance it concludeth me.  
 For, glad or willingly, who would come where  
 As he should clearly know his coming were  
 An evident and undoubted induction  
 To his infallible fall of destruction;—

Whereby it seemeth I can no way avoid  
Thy coming here to be against thy will.  
But now the fly so far is overjoyed,  
That by no manner mean he can sit still.  
He stretched, and fet a hem right sharp and  
shril.

Whereat the spider smirk and smoothly smiled,  
To see the silly fly so far beguiled.

And yet showed the semblance of falsity,  
So as it might appear that he did smile  
(For joy) upon the fly's behalf, that he  
So wittily wound out of this exile,  
Which set the fly in glory for the while.  
In sight whereof, the spider's pleasure had,  
From laughing look to lowering look full sad.

These words he sourly said, Though I now  
yield,  
Granting that thou cam'st here unwillingly,  
Yet shall the fly (at one stroke) lose the field,  
In all the rest hereof immediately  
Even with the same weapon thou wonnest this  
by;  
As thus, by the danger that flies here find,  
Thou provest to come hither against thy mind.

[F.i.v.]

This well excuseth thy coming hither,  
But (quoth the spider) for thy going hence,  
When we have scanned these words together,  
Thy reason is hardly worth forty pence.  
It is a perfect proof in evidence  
For my part, and includeth brief conclusion,  
Of condemnation, to thy confusion.

For though thy coming, were against thy will,  
What hope to help thee hence doth that imply,  
Since death here had or imprisonment still  
Is all thy proof, thy so coming to try?  
Now (quoth the spider) speak out, good man  
fly,  
This verdict thus given by your own consent,  
Who can blame me thereon to give judgment?



[F.ii.r.]

The fly herewith is abashed, but anon he gathereth himself to a stay showing a reason, that maketh a manifest show clearly to overthrow the spider's foresaid policy. Cap. 13.



[F.ii.v.]

THE fly at this set such a piercing sigh  
As made the heart in his poor carcass  
quake,  
And clapt his hand so hard upon his thigh  
That of that cobweb every part did shake;  
And time it was for him, now to awake;

HEY. III.

F

Such a choking check to a fly in cloister,  
A mean wit may deem it was a choking oyster.

The spider yielding to the fly's fore saying,  
Was a cast beyond the fly's expectation.  
Whereon the fly, spying the spider's inveighing,  
Thus far against the fly in approbation,  
He seemed to take great discontentation  
With himself, to see his own words give state  
To the spider to give him this blind mate.

Howbeit anon stay in himself he took,  
Saying these words, both with good heart and  
wit :

Good master spider, if ye rightly look  
In all yet past, all knots between us knit,  
Judgment with justice shall fear me no whit.  
Fly (quoth the spider) tell me that tale soon ;  
We have well begun, but nothing nigh done.

And yet even now for all thy bragging boast,  
T'account this case, if we now condescend,  
The payment of th'account will be thy cost ;  
For though thou burglary do here defend,  
And felony, that doth hereon depend,  
Yet for my purpose thine own confession  
Hath peaceably put me in possession.

[F.iii.1.]

What though thou didst unwillingly this deed,  
Yet thyself confessing, as thou doest here,  
Death or dealy prisonment to proceed,  
What helpeth, I say, thy proof to stand clear,  
Since notwithstanding though that proof ap-  
pear,

Thyself hast confessed here thyself to be  
Dead, or dead prisoner at least, with me.

Indeed, sir (said the fly) even as ye say,  
 Except my words for my now hither coming,  
 May have exposition some other way  
 Than it seemeth they shall have, after your  
 summing,  
 Better for me were to exercise mumming,  
 Than that my speech should show me such an  
 elf  
 To make mine own words condemn mine own  
 self.

But since my reason, joined with your consent,  
 Approveth my coming here against my will,  
 By foreknown death (I say) or prisonment,  
 Then is my reason to the point not ill;  
 For as ye have granted, and must grant still,  
 Discharge me (at full) it doeth and must do.  
 Of burglary and felony, both two.

And thus this one reason of mine (ye see)  
 Answereth all your reasons (save one) whereby  
 Ye lay to me that I acknowledge me  
 (In manner) by agreement here to die,  
 Or, till I die, here in prison to lie;  
 But once mine answer to those words spoken,  
 If Justice hold, this prison is broken.

[F.iii.v.]

For though I acknowledge to know before  
 Such danger, as witnesseth my confession,  
 Yet lieth the right or the wrong still in store,  
 The which must try, whether your possession,  
 Of me here be lawful, or oppression;  
 But have I known perils here never so long,  
 Doth that knowledge prove you to do no wrong.

If that were true, every thief might say,  
In place whereas robberies accustomed were,  
That he might by custom rob there alway,  
Because custom avoucheth that thieves rob  
there.

I see this example offendeth your ear,  
And so it may; for it proveth by proof clear  
That I am imprisoned wrongfully here.



[F.iv.r.]

**T**he spider checketh the fly, for his comparing above the spider in knowledge of law and custom, which the fly maintaineth by one reason commonly reported. Whereupon the spider perceiving the policy, for which he seemed to grant the fly to come against his will, taketh little or no place, that much weakening his part, he driveth the fly to draw back that grant.

Cap. 14.



[F.iv.v.]

**T**HIS is a good brag, fly (quoth the spider)  
To set in the forefront of thy battle,  
And a meet reason, for an outrider,

That would, by facing, his enemies expel ;  
 And be ye sure it doth wonderfully well  
 To see a fly think himself presumptuously  
 Better seen in law and custom than I.

Forsooth (quoth the fly) no displeasure taken,  
 My learning of reason ought to pass yours,  
 In Westminster Hall I am not forsaken,  
 But may be a termer all times and hours ;  
 And that in appearance passeth your powers ;  
 For, as common report may be a proof,  
 There never com'th cobweb in that hall roof.

The buzzing being in Westminster Hall  
 Of a flesh fly, every man may forbear  
 As well as my presence. And sure I shall  
 Prove it as hard for thee to get out here,  
 As thou would'st prove for me to get in there :  
 And ere we depart, I shall turn that journey  
 From personal appearance to attorney.

And which of our learnings also is best  
 Shall come to trial when we come to end,  
 And my replication as yet shall rest  
 Unto your answer, by which ye pretend  
 To prove me, by extortion, to offend,  
 Wherein in effect ye say that I lay  
 No reason of right, your body to stay.

[G.i.r.]

In which, what matter I have to allege,  
 By reason, conscience, custom and law,  
 Not only to keep you here as in pledge,  
 But also your body to death to draw,  
 That cor'sive would cursedly your stomach  
 gnaw.

Howbeit, for an ease to your panting heart,  
 I shall (for a season) set that apart.

And partly peruse, by way of retreat,  
 Some part of this matter granted before.  
 Nay sir (quoth the fly) that were but a let;  
 Let us here retreat, or repeat no more,  
 Till time that judgment do try our whole store.  
 By Gis, fly, thou speaketh like a fool (quoth he)  
 The sooner we take end, the worse for thee.

But I perceive thou wouldest pass over this,  
 Thereby to win all between us yet passed,  
 Wherein I grant thine advantage grown is,  
 By mean of my granting in over much haste  
 That thou art here against thy will now placed;  
 Which grant I granted to make thine own  
     ground  
 Prove thee in prison here rightfully bound.

And yet my words in this grant, thoroughly  
     weighed,  
 Weigh not this absolutely granted to be.  
 To thy words for coming against thy will laid,  
 I said they (in appearance) concluded me,  
 And that as it seemed I must grant it to thee;  
 Which words import not full power to be able  
 To bind this thus granted irrevocable.

[G.i.v.]

But since thou hast found thisfeat starting hole  
 To hide thy head in, thus promptly provided,  
 I will yet once again quicken this cole,  
 Whether will or not will thee hither guided.  
 Why sir (quoth the fly), then am I derided.  
 Not a whit (quoth the spider), be content;  
 An old tale misreckoning is no payment.

And if thou think it an hindrance to thee  
This part of process to call back again,  
When thou canst take like advantage of me,  
I grant thee like liberty to obtain.  
Agreed (quoth the fly) for when he saw plain  
The spider thus bent determinately,  
He thought it folly him to contrary.



[G.ii.r.]

*¶They reason afresh, to try whether the fly  
came into the spider's cobweb against his will  
or not.*

Cap. 15.



[G.ii.v.]

**F**LY (quoth the spider) go we to the pith.  
Thou sayest thou camst hither against thy  
will,  
And thy only reason to prove it with  
Is foreknowledge of death, or this, as ill,  
Perpetual prisoner here to lie still;  
Concluding as no wight were so unwise  
Willingly to come where known perils arise.

Contrary whereof is seen every day,  
 In seeing daily that thieves every one,  
 Committing robberies in any highway,  
 Do know assuredly, twenty to one,  
 If they be had, they shall hang thereupon;  
 And yet if they totter twenty together,  
 Still do thieves rob there; now who leadeth  
 them thither?

That do themselves (quoth the fly) and cause  
 why,  
 Each thief thinketh to escape thence, as hath  
 escaped mo.

Think they so? (said he) then why may not I  
 Think that thou thoughtest likewise from hence  
 to go?

Nay, sir (quoth the fly) I could not think so;  
 Never was there fly in this net, thus masked,  
 That ever escaped, as far as I have asked.

Well fly (quoth he), if thou this part wilt save,  
 Answer well these questions that follow here.  
 Hast thou had free will, as other flies have?  
 Yea, sir. Is not (quoth he) thine eyesight  
 clear?

Yes, sir. Did ever frenzy in thee appear?  
 Nay, sir. Be thy wings good and each other  
 limb?

Yea, sir. And all thy body lusty and trim?

[G.iii.r.]  
 Yea, sir. Then (quoth the spider) it should  
 seem  
 Thou art thine own leader? Yea (quoth the  
 fly).  
 Did any wight (quoth he) use means extreme

To bring thee? None that I can verify.  
 Did I send for thee? Nay, sir, verily.  
 And yet thou art here, art thou not, quoth he?  
 Yes, sir, against my will, I assure ye.

Well then (quoth the spider) thou grantest to  
 have had

Free will, and that thou hast good sight of eye,  
 Lusty limbs to lead thee, and never wast mad,  
 Compelled to come, as who say forcibly,  
 Or to be sent for, thyself dost deny;  
 And yet thorough facing, thou fainest here  
 To come now hither, against thy will clear.

Which the false demeanour, consider who will,  
 Doth well approve thee a crafty kind thief,  
 Lying and stealing, will together still.  
 Oh (quoth the fly) this augmenteth my grief,  
 Thus to be charged with desertless repreef!  
 I am a true fly, sure I can no false knacks;  
 Alas, master spider, ye be too capax!

As by this example may well be tried.  
 Put case free will, and your limbs led you now  
 To pass some narrow bridge by some highway's  
 side,  
 And in that passage should chance (God save  
 you)  
 To slip into the ditch, and break your brow,  
 Or else (in a good hour be it spoken)  
 Ye were in peril your neck to be broken:—

[G.iii.v.]

And that while ye were in that ditch scrawling,  
 And scratching in the mire to save your life,  
 The lord of that soil would in that falling

Attach you of theft, and then would be rife  
 To charge you, as ye charge me in this strife,  
 Against your will ye were not thither brought,  
 But your will itself brought yourself unsought.

How would ye answer this, sir? (quoth the fly)  
 I would (quoth the spider) say that my will  
 Led me not to fall in, but to pass by.  
 What if that saying liked him so ill  
 That he would say he might call ye thief still,  
 In that for your passing, under or over,  
 Ye were of your will let in neither nother?

Then were I driven (quoth the spider) to move  
 Some part of the difference between these three,  
 Will, power, and chance, wherein I might soon  
 prove

That although my will be never so free,  
 Yet in active things will cannot bring me  
 To accomplish those acts, for power or chance  
 Must join with will, ere outward act advance.

For would I never so willingly will  
 To wear Paul's steeple for a turkey hat,  
 Yet since I might indeed eat a horse-mill  
 As soon as have power so to prank with that,  
 That will were as wise as will of a wat;  
 My will may will freely this to obtain,  
 But will above power, thus wild, is in vain.

[G.iv.r.]

Will without power, as in things actual,  
 Can work nought, and where power and will  
 both be,  
 Chance doth right oft both power and will  
 appal;

Above power and against will, oft we see  
That, contrary to powers and will's decree,  
Chance chanceth so, as when by power and will  
We are pressed forth, chance charmeth us to  
stand still.

Example hereof let us here now make  
By the said bridge and ditch, that you erst laid,  
At which, though power and will would under-  
take

To bring me over, chance might see me stayed,  
And both from power and will so far conveyed  
In going over that bridge, that chance's trip  
Might pop me into that ditch even at a whip.



[G.iv.v.]

**T**hey continue in pursuit of trial, whether the fly came thither willingly or unwillingly, so far, that the fly (at length) offereth to take a book oath that he came against his will. Cap. 16.



[H.i.r.]

**T**HIS is unanswerable (quoth the fly)  
And a reason for my part worth a pike,  
As chance against will might make you there  
lie,

Why might not chance even as well in case like  
Lay me in this cobweb, as you in that dike?  
Fly (quoth the spider) thou art not askéd  
Whether chance so might, but whether chance  
so did.

What (quoth the fly) if this man did purpose?  
 That question to you, I could (quoth he) well  
 Make apparent proof, on my part disclose,  
 That into that ditch chance did me compel.  
 For nought is there to steal, but apparel,  
 And all men know I nought desire nor need  
 Those staring garments of mire and green  
 weed.

In faith (quoth the fly) and I love as ill  
 To be in these russets at Whitsuntide;  
 I wear your grey garment with as ill will  
 As ye would the green at the ditch's side.  
 Wherefore this reason is as well applied  
 For my delivery out of this place,  
 As for yours (God save you) were ye in case.

Yea (quoth the spider) but our two cases  
 Be as unlike, as our grey and our green;  
 Ditches be common and open places,  
 Wherein to spiders and all folk is seen  
 That neither now is, nor never hath been,  
 For spiders in ditches, ought to desire  
 By stealth, gift, borrowing, buying or hire.

[H.i.v.]

But what commodity here is for thee  
 That is to thee and to all the world hidden?  
 This house is too close, thou seest, in to see,  
 And also all flies that herein have slidden  
 They have (as thou sayest) so long here abid-  
 den,  
 That by return of any messenger  
 Tidings from hence (I know) thou couldst none  
 hear.

Wherefore although thou find nought here indeed,  
[better.

Yet I think thou thoughtest sure to have found  
Sir, though ye think I thought better to speed,  
Shall thinking lead you, without word or letter,  
To cast me away thus, the proof no greater?  
Remember (quoth he), and began to tremble,  
The peril of your soul, if ye dissemble.

For by the way that my soul shall go too  
I came hither against my will unfeigned,  
Which clearly declareth I thought to do  
No robbery here, but fain would have refrained  
Any part of this house to have constrained.  
Which to be true (quoth the fly) if ye look  
To have me sworn, I will swear on a book.



[H.ii.r.]  
 ¶The spider not admitting the fly to his oath,  
 the fly bringeth in the strength of the affirmative  
 for his part against the negative on the  
 spider's side. Whereunto adjoined his other  
 reasons laid in discharge of charge past, he  
 hopeth, according to Justice promised, to be  
 straight discharged.

Cap. 17.



[H.ii.v.]

WHY hast thou (quoth he) thou unhappy  
 hook,  
 No conscience to be a perjured wretch?  
 That oath (quoth he) by the way that God took,  
 HEY. III.

G

Should of my conscience neither make breach,  
Nor yet any part of my conscience stretch.  
Well (quoth the spider) yet would I be loth,  
In this case, to trust a fly by an oath.

Sir, mine affirmation in th'affirmative,  
In law and reason, is much more credible  
Than your denial in the negative;  
Your nay, to my yea, must needs be fallible.  
And in case present, it is impossible  
To approve your part; for how can it be  
That you the secrets of my breast can see?

It is as certain that you know them not  
As it is certain they are known to me.  
Then if I swear that chance me hither got  
Against my will, were it reason if ye  
Swear the contrary, believed should be  
As well as myself, when truth can appear  
To none but myself, as appeareth clear?

I make myself sure, yourself thinketh not so:  
Which considered, let us now consider  
Some part of this past ere we further go,  
Wherein proof prooveth my coming hither  
To be against my will altogether.  
Which square shall square me, a scantling well  
bent  
For a right rule, to show me innocent.

[H.iii.7.]

And in the ears of all that ought can skill  
Shall discharge me in all that hath been said,  
Or can be laid coming against my will,  
How can burglary against me be weighed,  
And in this felony what can be said?  
Thanking my truth I may here truly say  
This wisp hath wiped all this work away.

That wisp of yours (quoth the spider) sheweth  
want

Of cleanly scouring, when all cometh together.  
Proof of your tale, I take it very scant  
To make me take your present coming hither  
To be against your will, for how or whither  
Could ye thus come, but ye might soon deny  
To come with will, as long as ye can lie?

Though I can lie, that is yet no trial  
That I have lied, in which, sir (quoth the fly),  
Only except stiff or stern denial,  
Ye can allege no reason to bide by,  
Wherein I have alleged approbately.  
Your nay, against my yea, can in this case  
By no reasonable mean rightly take place.

Now since this part we have not only brought,  
To yea and nay, and that mine affirmation  
Hath fully brought your negative to nought,  
So that the same, by grounded sure substance,  
Dischargeth (in effect) this chargéd chance,  
Performéd promise of justice, I trist,  
Shall from this court now seem straight dis-  
missed.

[H.iii.v.]

*The spider upon a case in law touching th'affirmative, taketh hold to detain the fly still in possession, but yet under promise of justice before promised.*

Cap. 18.



[H.iv.r.]

**W**OULD ye trudge in post haste, fly? nay,  
not so;  
Ye may report in me small courtesy  
Except I make ye drink once ere ye go.  
I thank you (quoth the fly) but verily  
I will not drink, for I am now not dry.  
Though ye will not tarry to drink (quoth he)  
Yet must ye tarry of necessity.

Put case your allegations match with mine,  
 And further set your yea above my nay,  
 Yet will I not permute nor yet resign  
 Possession of your body here this day  
 For your affirmative which ye do lay  
 Against my negative; for without witness  
 Th'affirmative doth no title dispossess.

Thus, though possession fully not suffice  
 To be a bar against your affirmatives,  
 Yet bringeth possession clause of warrantise,  
 By which I here may keep you in these gyves  
 (You lacking witness) some part of our lives.  
 But (quoth the spider) truth, truly to tell,  
 Thou hast (for a fly) said exceeding well.

Concerning coming here against thy will,  
 Whereon (as yet) our matter all doth stay,  
 Both parts appear of so pure perfect skill  
 That we have brought each other to the bay,  
 I thee to yea, and thou me to nay;  
 And as in law thy yea seemeth to seem greater,  
 Than doth my nay, which showeth thy part the  
 better.

[H.iv.v.]

For that ye once by witness well approved  
 That thou against thy will dost here appear,  
 Then hast thou won the whole (as yet) here  
 moved,

Approving thyself clearly to stand clear  
 Of burglary and felony laid here.

For by what mean can any wight make preef  
 That any wight without will is a thief?

But forasmuch as that point is not yet  
 Lawfully provéd, I intend to keep  
 Thee in possession, awhile here to sit,

Till we this matter weigh somewhat more deep.  
Nay, feare not, fly, thou are unwise to weep,  
For I will not all only not destroy thee,  
(Unrightfully) but further not annoy thee.

Nor of or on give judgment any way,  
Till time thyself (if thou reasonable be)  
Shalt see that I may justly do and say,  
By justice erst promiséd unto thee,  
All that shall be said or done here by me.  
Which justice shall prove me so just a judge,  
That thou, nor no fly, shall have cause to  
grudge.



[I.i.r.]  
 ¶The spider, seeing that he cannot take full hold of the fly in case of burglary nor felony, he chargeth him now with trespass, to which the fly reasoneth.

Cap. 19.



[I.i.v.]  
**H**EREUNTO, for entry toward an end,  
 Admit for time thou cam'st against thy  
 mind,  
 Declaring thy defence, well to defend  
 Burglary and felony of each kind;  
 Yet thou nor no fly is so beetle blind  
 But thou and they apparently may see  
 That at the least thou hast trespasséd me.

I say and thou dost see, a thousand mark,  
 Frameth not this frame, as it framed ere this  
 fill;

Were it then meet in such a piece of work  
 I cry you mercy, I thought you none ill?  
 Or else, I came hither against my will,  
 Should be full restitution for the act,  
 Without a more amends made in compact.

In case it is, and in case it is not,  
 As by example (quoth the fly) put case  
 That in some highway it should be my lot  
 To drive a cart, in some one such a place,  
 As from that way's side, within little space  
 There were standing a house on a fair green,  
 And I, perceiving that way much more clean

Than the highway, straight to that way I coast,  
 And as I drive, the said house to pass by,  
 My cart wheel catcheth hold of the corner post  
 Against my will, and by violency  
 Asunder crusheth it, to which haply  
 The rest of that house is so bent and bound,  
 That in default thereof, all falleth to the  
 ground,

[I.ii.7.]

In this case, master spider (quoth the fly)  
 Chance the chance by day, or chance it by  
 night,  
 And chance it never so unwillingly,  
 Yet law and lawful reason sheweth it right  
 That recompense punish mine oversight;  
 Law maintaineth no man, with or against will,  
 To do an act so to any man's ill.

But now put case, that within this highway  
This house were set, whereas my cart should  
go,

Which did so crush the same that there it lay ;  
For houses in highways encroaching so,  
Cast I down one house, or a thousand more,  
There am I bound by reason nor by law,  
To recompense the value of a straw ?

Weigheth not the law (fly) these cases for such,  
As both in the t'one case and in the t'other,  
The owner's hurt to be fully as much  
In one of these cases, as in another ?  
His hurt is (quoth the fly) in th'one and  
th'other

Hurtful alike, for be he lief or loath,  
Down cometh his house, in either case of both.

But the doing differeth, for the first fact  
I did against the law, as law doth tell,  
And every wight is charged with every act  
Of his own doing at his own peril.

Whereby the law provideth very well,  
Driving my cart, by adventure at large,  
The hurt in th'adventure I must discharge.

[I.ii.v.]

But in this last fact the fault (quoth the fly)  
Is wholly turned unto the sufferer's side,  
For himself did an act unlawfully  
His house to set up there, which deed so tried  
Myself and eke my cart, law doth provide  
Harmless to save, for, sir, the law is strong,  
In taking such hurts, for hurts without wrong.

And in this last case (quoth the fly) stand we,  
In all this hurt here done I do no wrong,  
But all the hurt ye have, is (ye may see)  
By your wrong doing on yourself along.  
What can you spiders show yourselves among,  
By any kind of law, what way ye may  
Lawfully build within this my highway?



[I.iii.r.]

The spider (at the fly's answering him to a question) chargeth the fly with procuring of other flies to disturb him in his cobwebs, which the fly denieth.

Cap. 20.



[I.iii.v]

**T**HY highway (fly)? art thou lord of this soil?

A poor lord, sir, but if truth may be found,  
I stand in case to defend this spoil.

What is thy name (quoth the spider) speak round?

Buz (quoth the fly) with curtsey to the ground.  
That name of Buz (quoth the spider) doth show thee,

Even for a ringleader to make me know thee.

Of all the flies that herein have been stayed,  
 Never was there one in my conscience  
 But the first word that ever he hath said  
 Was buz, which is apparent evidence  
 That all flies have thee in great reverence,  
 Thinking the policy or power of thee  
 Shall set them all from hence at liberty.

Whereby I may (and do) take occasion,  
 To think that thou hast been the fool procurer  
 Of every fly that hath made invasion  
 Into my house, and such a lewd allurer  
 Ought by good reason to be kept much surer  
 Than forty flies, such as thou hast beforne  
 Enticed hither, and then laughed them to scorn.

Sir (quoth the fly) truth is my true record,  
 I am guiltless of this suspected blame;  
 I have enticed, in earnest nor in bound,  
 Any fly hither, nor it is no game  
 One fly to mock at another's harm or shame,  
 Nor by enticement to bring a fly where  
 As the enticer doth stick, to come there.

[I.iv.r.]

And though (as I said) I can prove it such  
 That this highway is mine for free passage,  
 And that every fly hath right here as much,  
 Yet was I never so set in dotage  
 To set any fly (by indiscreet courage)  
 To put possession of his right in ure,  
 To his destruction and your displeasure.

If ye can prove that ever I provoked  
 Any fly hither, by word or writing,  
 Or by sign of purpose, craftily cloaked,

To possession here any fly erighting,  
Then, without more words by mouth or enditing,  
In our whole case much doubtful how to try,  
I yield myself condemned undoubtedy.



[I.iv.v.]

¶They fall in comparison touching their evidence written or unwritten, whereunto the fly layeth prescription of custom, (which he before alleged) supposing thereby that the spider ought both to deliver him, and make him amends.

Cap. 21.



[K.i.r.]

**W**ELL (quoth the spider) though this suspicion

Were clearly cleared, yet hast thyself clear  
Brought in another of worse condition.

As thus : thy claim to have thy highway here  
 Bringeth thee suspected a thief to appear ;  
 This is th'old use alway ; all the world knows  
 True men in at doors, thieves in at windows.

Master spider, harp no more on that string ;  
 I come the same way that your mastership  
 doth ;

There is small melody in that harping,  
 Conferring precedents with present sooth,  
 Changeth oft the barking tongue to biting  
 tooth.

Bark or bite who will, fly, I dare abide  
 To see title present by precedent tried.

Sir, so dare I then, and shall be well able  
 To void your suspicion and prove my guise  
 Not only lawful, but thereto laudable.

What evidence have you contrarywise,  
 But gnats, bees, wasps, hornets, and all we  
 flies,

At crevice, and windows, with bag and bag-  
 gage,

Have had egress to regress by old usage ?

This weigheth as (who say) there's none evi-  
 dence

Showeth contrary, but this way thine may be,  
 Which is no proof for thy part worth twopence,  
 So might I claim everything that I see  
 Which were in writing not forbidden me ;  
 But it is not enough not to be denied,  
 For titles must specially be specified.

[K.i.v.]

Sir (quoth the fly) specialties in writing  
 Specially to specify yours and mine,  
 Should we be driven to show such enditing,

That would (I fear) blank both our parts in fine.  
 Our chief evidence that we can assign  
 For proof or disproof, by any decrees,  
 Standeth in virtue of unwritten verities.

Fly, this tale weigheth not a fly tail (quoth he)  
 Canst thou show aught of proof or disproof  
 clear

By written or unwritten words to see  
 But that our possession shall clear appear  
 As ancient as thy succession here?  
 Sir (quoth the fly) I stick not to agree  
 Ye have been possessed here as long as we.

And long might be; for by the god of might  
 I never knew fly but was with the same  
 Heartily content, as far as by right  
 Your own ground might bear, to enlarge your  
 frame.

But to be plain, this is the thing we blame—  
 That ye thus of will, without our consent,  
 Usurp on us by mean of encroachment.

Good honest flies a thousand that I know  
 Will say and sweare it was th'accustomed guise  
 That spiders builded in every window  
 In the top, or by the sides in such wise  
 As the rest of the lattice for all flies,  
 By common known custom, when we would set,  
 Stood free at liberty from any let.

[K.ii.r.]

But this is building of another size  
 How may any fly this way easily get  
 By any way that his wit can devise.  
 Here is a frame in such a fashion set,  
 As all were fish that might come to the net.  
 So far this lattice is overcovered  
 I marvel yourself will see it suffered.

The case of the cart in law laid ere this  
(Custom adjoined) this way mine own to try,  
Avoucheth for me that you have done amiss  
To encroach or usurp unlawfully  
In my highway; then of reason think I  
Ye ought in law, custom, and conscience,  
Both let me pass and make me recompense.



[K.ii.v.]

**T**he spider denyeth the fly's description of custom, alleging the saying of ancient spiders for his interest by custom. Wherein anon, both showing each to give small credit to other, the fly moveth to put the matter in arbitrament, which (as yet) the spider doth not grant.

Cap. 22.



[K.iii.r.]

**L**AW and custom, those twain of thy laid  
three  
(Namely law) somewhat reasoned here have  
been,  
But of conscience (save that name named we)

No word was touched since we did first begin.  
 Time cometh not yet to bring conscience in  
 Of law and custom; to ease rigor's force  
 Conscience at last course procureth remorse.

But thy cart case, and all cases last laid  
 In charge of trespass thy part to defend,  
 May be determined (for ought here yet weighed)  
 As they on law and custom do depend,  
 Which thou dost allege, with me to contend.  
 But thy description of prescription here  
 In our accustomed rights, I deny clear.

Fly, I can bring forth spiders true and old,  
 More worshipful than thou canst bring forth  
 flies,

To swear that to them their forefathers told,  
 Time far beyond mind, custom's exercise  
 Approved us to build in as large size  
 As I have builded here, and in thy plat  
 Ten or twelve holes, to creep in and out at.

Touching custom, th'oath of ten thousand flies  
 Can (by way of witness) bring nought to ease  
 In flies' credence to spiders, there doth rise  
 No difference in oath the worth of a pease  
 Between a thousand flies and a thousand fleas.  
 Nay fly (quoth he) and shook him by the neb,  
 There shall no fly's oaths 'minish this cobweb.

[K.iii.v.]

Where ye (quoth the fly) think flies partial,  
 For witness herein, that challenge may be  
 In spiders and flies in this case equal.  
 Since spiders be parties as well as we,  
 Why should not we fear partiality,  
 As much in you as you think it in us,  
 And trust you as little, this standing thus?

But reason (said the spider) ye so do,  
 Then can this trespass not be tried this way?  
 We are at yea and nay again both two,  
 For you no credence give to that I say,  
 And I as little credit that you lay,  
 Naught granting each to other, but denial:  
 How can we twain determine then this trial?

If (quoth the spider) I would condescend  
 To build in corners at thine assignment,  
 And straight let thee pass, we were straight at  
 end.

So were we (quoth the fly) were I content,  
 At your only word, my life to relent.  
 Of which two ways, if the tone nor the tother  
 Be reasonable, let us look out another.

What way (fly) by thy faith, canst thou espy  
 That may seem meet to make us twain agree?  
 If I be the deviser (quoth the fly)  
 Then shall you choose one, whom it pleaseth ye,  
 And I another whom it pleaseth me;  
 And as they two award upon the whole  
 We two to bide: happy man, happy dole.

[K.iv.7.]

So might I haply be happy (quoth he)  
 But I could not be both happy and wise.  
 This proverb proveth this a fool's decree,  
 A thing assured to hazard at the dice,  
 It bought and had, to buy at a new price,  
 Or bring a certainty for any saying,  
 To an uncertainty by doubtful daying.

All things considered in this time and place,  
 What were my wit to put this thing in ure?  
 What could I win by that cast in this case,

And what couldst thou here lose since thou art  
sure,  
At will, in my hand to die or endure?  
The worst of this way were hurtless to thee,  
And the best of this way fruitless to me.



[K.iv.v.]

The fly (after a few words concerning appeal)  
doth briefly recapitulate th'effect passed in the  
principal case.

Cap. 23.



[L.i.r.]

SIR, if ye consider nothing but winning,  
No doubt (quoth the fly) it is so indeed.  
But by your promise made me at beginning  
Of justice here, I hope no haste of speed  
For greedy getting shall make ye proceed  
Contrary thereto, in hope of which dealing  
I did at beginning revoke appealing.

But if your dealing deal dole otherwise,  
 Contraryng justice erst granted here,  
 My revocation of appeal likewise  
 I will revoke, and as things now appear,  
 I must revoke that revocation clear,  
 Or else that justice here, although ye would,  
 Cannot (according to your promise) hold.

For so is now this matter brought about  
 That it to judge neither can you nor I;  
 We both be parties so partial that this doubt  
 Must be discussed and judged indifferently  
 By folk indifferent, which if ye deny  
 In such form as I have here erst devised,  
 Than by the justice which ye erst promised,

I claim the common law, where, I am sure  
 To save me safe from harm, that law hath  
 ground.

For if your evidence be put in ure,  
 That is so slight, I shall be guiltless found.  
 And being silent, if no witness found,  
 Then, this bondage of prison to discharge,  
 Proclamation straight shall set me at large.

[L.i.v.]

Nay, sir, ye must pay your fees ere ye go.  
 But goeth my part, fly, in thine opinion  
 No near unto the pith? Forsooth, sir, no.  
 Your case in law is not worth an inion.  
 Well fly (quoth he) since thou art a minion  
 Of so large learning, I pray thee teach me  
 Some lesson in this tale to believe thee.

That lesson showeth here not so far behind  
 In lack of learning as of remembrance,  
 For if it like you here to call to mind

By brief recital the very substance  
 Argued (as yet) between us in this chance,  
 I doubt not in the same yourself to see  
 Cause in my former words to credit me.

As thus : ye remember our matter past  
 Yourself hath divided into parts three,  
 Burglary, felony, and trespass last.  
 And first for burglary ye saw, and must see,  
 That flies by nature no night thieves can be ;  
 And though we could, yet might yourself in  
 sight

Witness with me to come now by daylight.

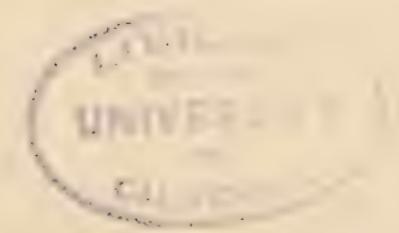
And unto this, touching the second charge,  
 Which chargeth me with single felony,  
 I am assured you searching at large,  
 Remembering my coming unwillingly,  
 Shall well perceive my pure innocence ;  
 In talk whereof the truth must make us say,  
 That we at length were driven to yea and nay.

[L.ii.7.]

Wherein I prove that mine affirmative  
 Your negative so clearly doth confute,  
 That I dare say any jury alive  
 (You letting not the case fall to nonsuit,  
 But stand to trial, in that we dispute)  
 Shall (upon hearing what this month until)  
 Give verdict with coming against my will.

And thirdly, in trespass you charging me  
 With the hurt of your house, I nothing doubt  
 The cart case shall make jury and judge see  
 This trespass on my side clean scrapéd out,  
 And this debate at end so brought about  
 That in this lattice law shall well approve  
 The holes all mine, and you to build above.

Now since of us twain no one can be judge,  
Because we be both extreme partial parties,  
I wonder what cause doth cause you to grudge  
At the arbitrament that I devise.  
In these three said cases there can arise,  
In your recovery by the common law,  
None advantage to the value of a straw.



[L.ii.v.]

The spider putteth a case in appeal, ill (in appearance) for the fly, as the spider draweth it. And anon he by example of the lord's will had in courts of copyhold, seeming to lean toward will, the fly laboureth to qualify that will.

Cap. 24.



[L.iii.r.]

**T**HOU shalt (quoth the spider) in this  
strife all  
Answer thyself by thy answering me  
To one question which now demand I shall.

My fellow fly, I put this case to thee,  
That this same day at London chanced to be  
Some man committing such a heinous deed  
That death (by law in London) should proceed.

The which deed, being at Louvain committed,  
Law (there) for that deed no death doth provide.  
The faulter herein, so wiley witted,  
To save his life appealeth to be reprise  
From London to Louvain, there to be tried.  
Were it, fly (quoth he) reason in this case  
That this man's appeal should take any place?

I think, sir (quoth the fly) it were no reason  
To grant request of such appeal in case  
Of crimes deserving death at any season.  
But th'offender, being taken in place  
Where he did the deed, to stand to the grace  
Of lawful law in that precinct present.  
Which, so judging him, I take just judgment.

Quoth the spider, God have mercie on thee !  
Amen (quoth the fly) but why speak you that?  
I speak (and pray) it even of charity.  
Never was there yet any lark or wat,  
Before hawk or dog, flatter dared or squat  
Than by this answer all thy matter is.  
Thou hast condemned thyself, now, in all this.

[L.iii.v.]  
How so? (quoth the fly). Thus (quoth the spider)

Thou grantest, where faulters do an enter-  
prise,  
Which worthy death the law doth consider,  
Th'enterpriser shall appeal in no wise,  
But take such chance as by law there doth rise.  
Adieu arbitrament and nisi prius !  
Instead of twelve or twain one shall now try us.

What one shall that be? Myself, quoth he.  
 Thy deed done here, hath, by law here, death  
 sure,  
 Alone to be tried at will of me.  
 At mine erst suit, (said the fly) here in ure,  
 Ye promised justice to be so pure  
 That, with or against me, ye would nought do,  
 But as myself in reason must 'gree to.

Wherein we being coming toward the point,  
 In performance of promise, to see trial,  
 Now is just justice so jotted out of joint,  
 That ye here unjustly stand at denial  
 To do me justice, and would by power royal  
 Direct mine acquital or condemnation,  
 Even as will in both weigheth your acceptation.

Fly, dost thou weigh my will herein thus light?  
 In every petty court of copyhold,  
 All grants that pass, passing in their most  
 might,  
 Pass to hold at lord's will, and so enrolled.  
 Sir (quoth the fly) copyholders of old  
 Hold to them and theirs at will of the lord,  
 As with custom of the manor doth accord.

[L.iv.r.]

But this term custom standeth not here idle;  
 Custom (in many cases) seemeth to me  
 To tenants a buckler, to lords a bridle.  
 From trespassing wherein if tenants see  
 (On their parts) customs kept as they should  
 be,  
 The will of the lord most wilfully bent,  
 Win the nought worth a bent, by custom's ex-  
 tent.

Were this window your manor in freehold,  
And flies here your copyholders known clear,  
And that I, being your tenant, ye would  
Lay in me breach of custom to appear.  
Yet should not your only will be judge here;  
For as th'omage (upon their oath) present,  
So custom bindeth the lord's will in judgment.

Fly, thinkest thou this case a buckler for thee?  
This case to our case (quoth the fly) being  
scanned,  
Is neither sword to you nor buckler to me.  
With sword and buckler we may go or stand  
Between both cases and touch neither hand.  
This case to lords and tenants is concurrent;  
But you are not my lord, nor I your tenant.



[L.iv.v.]

The fly claimeth all holes in all windows to be flies' in freehold, and that spiders should build by the sides or in the tops. Which case to be tried by law or custom, they in manner agree. But the fly moving it to be tried at the common law, the spider refuseth it. Whereupon ariseth matter of digression, in which the fly commendeth the spider for expedite hearing hereof, briefly defining the property of justice, mercy, and tyranny.

Cap. 25.



[M.i.7.]

I TAKE not myself appointed to patise,  
As you will set limits and bounds far or near,  
But clearly I claim all holes in all lattices

To be flies' freehold, as may right well appear  
Where I described when I prescribed here  
Your ancestors building the sides and the top,  
As flies at liberty in and out might chop.

And as law and custom, or the t'one of them,  
Shall judge this point wherein standeth much  
part of all,

To that will I stand, refusing none of them,  
Standing with your pleasure this case so stand  
shall.

Then quoth the spider, Take custom, let law  
fall;

Law can little say herein; law must refar  
The judgment to custom, to make or mar.

For true trying of custom, Sir (quoth the fly)  
The law (please it you) may try how custom  
weightheth.

What law, fly? The common law, sir, think I.  
Where shall we try, fly, what that law herein  
saith?

In Westminster Hall, sir. Why, fly, by thy  
faith,

Wouldst thou place this case whereon hangeth  
the sum

Where (thou sayest) I nor no spider may come?

How far art thou from th'equity toward me,  
That thou desirest in me toward thee to grow?  
Thou wouldst bring forth a thousand flies for  
thee,

Where no one spider for me may make show,  
And so by stealth wouldst win mine overthrow.

The law is one ground of four (quoth the fly),  
Which your former grant granteth to try all  
by.

[M.i.v.]

And though custom (as who say) in respect  
 Of trial in this case is itself law,  
 Yet (I say) law, for form in pleading direct,  
 Appearance of that trial for thee to draw  
 Is meet to be had I grant thee that, daw;  
 But not without this, that we both do agree  
 The pleading to be where both present may be.

It is meet (quoth the fly) and by you well  
 weighed,  
 (Urgent cause except) where matter shall pro-  
 ceed

Against any person or persons laid,  
 That he or they answer presently in deed.  
 And in greatest crimes, this hath greatest need;  
 For in crimes most criminal that law is pain  
 The chargéd party shall no counsel obtain.

Which sheweth that law in most need, least  
 help t'allow,  
 Whereto if the party be kept in absence,  
 So that he nor no man for him may avow  
 Any word in plea pleaded for his defence.  
 This law is somewhat sore, in my conscience.  
 Though fair tales in mine ear paint this a fair  
 case,  
 Yet in mine eye this case hath a crabbed face.

Since ye deny me not law, but ye deny  
 To plead this plea where ye present may not be,  
 Of that denial appeareth so good cause why,  
 That I shall not only most gladly agree  
 To have it pleaded where we both shall decree,  
 But also I rejoice that yourself espieth  
 This gall in this case, and what ill therein lieth.

One other joy (with many sorrows) I have.  
The cause whereof, commendeth you unspeakably.

In less time (in manner) than myself could crave,

After I am brought here in prison to lie,  
It standeth with your pleasure most charitably  
To hear, yea, and determine out of hand  
How my case standeth, and whereto myself shall stand.

Oh (master spider) the self deeds done in this  
Commend you more than may pen or tongue of man,

Th'attached of suspicion or fact amiss,  
Inquiry at full had, quickly as ye can,  
As justice judgeth, straight to dispatch him than,

Not letting him lie till his limbs rot or lame;  
Justice and mercy both concur in the same.

Fly (quoth the spider) favour is not all lost  
Showed unto thee, for thou canst consider it.  
But many other flies there be in the coast,  
In having like favour, the Devil speed the whit,  
They do ponder it; wherefore it is not fit,  
When chance or desert flies into prison strike  
To use foward and flexible flies alike,

Justice (quoth the fly) weighth what, and why to do,

Not to whom to do, by favour, meed, or frey;  
The man is not the mark that justice shooteth to,

The man's matter justice shooteth at alway.  
 Between God and the devil justice doth display  
 His banner indifferently, yielding each part,  
 In all due duties, the very due desert.

[M.ii.v.]

Mercy, joined with justice, doth either remit  
 Or qualify pains that due by justice seem,  
 Tyranny not with justice, but against it,  
 Not weighing desert, awardeth pains most ex-  
 treme.

Tyranny and mercy thus may we here deem,—  
 Tyranny, not with but against justice showeth ;  
 Mercy, with and not against justice groweth.

Justice place I here in the midst, as who say  
 Mercy on the right hand of justice to stand,  
 Tyranny on the left hand ; now if we sway  
 From the straight line of justice to either hand,  
 That sway must needs bring our swaying to be  
 scanned,

As we may appear to sway apparently  
 Either toward mercy or toward tyranny.

But in leaning to any hand of these twain  
 From sole justice when we incline to decline,  
 As commonwealth in this case may us main-  
 tain,

From corrupt construction this case to define,  
 I wish that we, each as our callings assign,  
 May lean to that hand with meet strength or  
 vigour

That mercy leaneth unto rather than rigour.

[*The tailpiece as on page 38 is here given in  
 the original.*]

[M.iii.r.]

The fly (for cause here appearing) desireth to repeat his distinction of justice, mercy, and tyranny, which the spider denieth. Wherewith the fly layeth to the spider breach of a promise made to him before in discharge, whereof the spider answereth.

Cap. 26.



[M.iii.v.]

THE spider hung down both his head and his lip,  
Like one that had nought, or wist nought, what to speak.  
Wherewith thought the fly,—I have given him a nip;

These distinctions have showed his part so weak,  
 That studying for matter he findeth none to break.  
 But where he thought the spider in study deep,  
 He was deceived : the spider was asleep.

And herewith starting awake, Fy, sloth, quoth he,  
 I had forgot myself ; I heard myself rout.  
 Nay, sir (quoth the fly) ye had forgotten me ;  
 The best part (for my part) ye have slept quite out.  
 Nay, not all, fly ; for I put thee out of doubt  
 Of all thy words had in my commendation,  
 I heard every word and can make relation.

But thine entry : to matter more serious  
 Brought me asleep ; but I pray thee heartily,  
 What's the point of that case so imperious ?  
 The pith is the distinction, quoth the fly,  
 Between justice, mercy, and tyranny.  
 Which since you heard not, and it much meet  
 to hear,  
 I shall repeat to you in form brief and clear.

That would (quoth the spider) make me sleep again,  
 And physic forbideth me to sleep twice a day ;  
 Repetition hereof I deny thee plain.  
 Reason, law, custom, and conscience, ye say.  
 Shall (quoth the fly) all our present matter weigh.  
 But touching reason, law, custom, and conscience, [since.  
 Two of those four principles are gone even

Which two (quoth the spider?) These two  
(quoth the fly)

Reason and conscience. As how, fly (quoth  
he?)

As thus, quoth the fly. Ye retreated lately  
And revoked a case which ye had granted me,  
Touching coming here against my will to be.  
At which when I grudged ye made me promise  
To have in the like case liberty likewise.

And now when I would (not revoke) but repeat  
This piece for my part, ye plainly that deny.  
What reason or conscience is here to get?  
Good reason and good conscience, fellow fly.  
But since reason is sufficient this to try,  
Let conscience (I say) stay till the last instant,  
Lest narrow conscience reason's wide scope  
might scant.

And upon perusing, let reason straight judge  
How far fled from reason thyself herein art.  
My retreated case (whereat thou didst erst  
grudge)

Is of matter present a principal part,  
Between which and thy case thou mayst drive  
a cart.

Distinction of terms in our main matter meant,  
Is (at next) a very far set incident.

But though thou wilt say thou canst draw this  
thy case

To stand with (or within) our ground principal,  
Yet is it needless to be brought here in place.  
Distinction of these terms and other all.

I know and can weigh as well as a fly shall,  
This digression, in telling, lost time before,  
And, now in repeating it, would lose time more.

[M.iv.v.]

Sir, it may length time, but not lose time;  
friend fly,

Length of time is no loss of time to thee indeed;  
Length of time is thy gain, but I lose thereby;  
Long time winneth the long life and loseth my  
quick speed,

Which I should quickly have were this quickly  
decreed;

Of this my fruitless walk avoiding the way  
To win way more fruitful this way let's assay.

From pith of this process (fly) where we fled  
out,

Thither retreat we, more loss of time to flee.

This repetition which thou wouldest bring about,  
As winning thereof winneth nought at length  
to thee,

So losing thereof loseth nought at length by me.

Since repetition the fly could not recover,  
He shook his head, and so let it pass over.



[N.i.r.]

The spider (reducing the fly to the principal matter) moveth the trial to be had in his own lordship, which the fly misliketh. Whereon ensueth a glance at the diversity of government, between one spider and twelve flies. Cap. 27.



[N.i.v.]

**E**RE while (by prescription of old flies) thou leddest

All holes in lattices to be other flies' and thine,  
In which prescription against us, as thou saidst,

Accustomed right in windows doth define  
 In the top and sides, our building to assign,  
 Which I denied, saying our forefathers old  
 Prescribed for us to build here where we would.

Upon this issue thou shewedst thyself content  
 That custom should (being pleaded in law)  
 Judge how the case standeth by customs ex-  
 tant,  
 Pleading whereof to common law thou didst  
 draw;  
 Pleading wherein, as thou saidst and I saw,  
 Should be in such place as I could not come to;  
 I denied trial there, and deny it I do.

Which denial to be reason, thyself told,  
 And here from purpose principal outfled we  
 By the digressing. But again to take hold,  
 And go forth therein, now let us further see,  
 Since the common law is as unmeet for me  
 As meet for thee, to plead custom herein  
 What other meet means? for us both we may  
 win.

What think you? (quoth the fly). Friend fly,  
 this think I,  
 Since I will not, and thou canst not, go hence,  
 So that we both shall remain here presently,  
 To hear and answer in personal presence,  
 Law, in my lordship, must try custom's de-  
 fence.

Be ye there again? (quoth the fly). By my fay,  
 We shall catch birds to-morrow and flies to-  
 day.

[N.ii.r.]

Will is now come in again, and must be called  
law,  
By thy ground laid for copyhold at will;  
It seemeth thou needst not care for my will a  
straw,  
As the homage presenteth (saidst thou) good or  
ill; [spill.  
So doth the lord's will in judgment save or  
So should the lord's will do, sir, I therein  
meant;  
But here goeth the hare away, right to prevent.

I, being neither spider nor spider's peer,  
Nor spider's tenant, nor spider's friend (ye say)  
I may have quick speed and fail of good speed  
here.

Though the homage should uprightly the ver-  
dict lay, [likewise weigh,  
And the lord (in judgment) with the right  
Yet some say, sometime, that the law is ended  
In some case, in some place, as folk are  
friended.

And I (quoth the spider) being neither fly,  
Nor to any fly of alliance or kin,  
Nor taken any fly's friend, why may not I  
In any pleading place, save that we be in,  
Doubt there (as thou dreadest here) good speed  
to win?

This case shall keep our case as the case now  
falls

Both from Westminster Hall and all such law  
halls.

Thou being abroad, buzzing in every place  
 Where thou hast more friendship, or less en-  
 mity

Than I have, thou may'st in every place pur-  
 chase

Friends against me more than I against thee;  
 And when we in pleading joined in issue be,  
 Thou may'st find friendship, to impanel the  
 quest [best.

Of twelve such friendly flies as seem for thee  
 [N.ii.v.]

Which kind of trial (for my part) I like not.  
 Wise learned counsel costly fine pleas first de-  
 vice, [that,

With cost and pain long followed, and after  
 Twelve unlearned, rude, ignorant, corrupt flies  
 Shall strike the stroke, as blind affection doth  
 rise.

By excellent wits law is ever begun,  
 And by ignorant wits end of law oft won.

Which to help, were I one of the procurers,  
 I would think it far better to breed up in brood  
 One wise true judge than twelve foolish false  
 jurors.

It is (quoth the fly) as old flies understood,  
 Not more hard (for spiders) to spy twelve flies  
 good,

Than easy (for flies) to find one spider naught;  
 And now note we here to what end this is  
 brought.

In place of twelve flies were one spider placed,  
 To give verdict and judgment of matters clear,  
 Yet might that change bring small good speed  
 in great haste.

One wily learned spider might hurt as much  
here  
As twelve unlearned blunt flies, by ought doth  
appear; [ill],  
And twelve good flies should (for all flies are not  
Do more good than one ill spider, weigh who  
will.

Between one good spider and twelve ill flies,  
Or those twelve flies good and that one spider  
ill, [rise].  
Apt comparison (quoth the spider) doth not here  
But that one and those twelve draw we here  
until,  
(To work good or ill) of one good or ill will.  
And so then best or worst, twelve or one, let  
us try  
Th'one best sort of two to govern windows by.

[N.iii.r.]  
And the one spider's part (in this part) I'll  
take. [the fly].  
And I'll take part with the twelve flies (quoth  
I'll lay first (quoth the spider) your part to  
shake,  
Reasons laid by a learned clerk formerly  
For the rule of one ruler capitally;  
Whose arch articles here together to weigh,  
In these next words here together I will lay.

Exampling the government of One Most High,  
He putteth the three persons, which three are  
God one.

And further he bringeth in (this t'exemplify)

The ship, on one keel all parts stand everyone ;  
 The house standeth under one top rafter alone ;  
 T'host, under one captain ; bees under one bee ;  
 The cranes one crane ; the herd one shepherd,  
 saith he.

To this (quoth the fly) another clerk answereth.  
 Similitude of God and man to man and man,  
 As far wide, as far set, the matter varieith.  
 And liberty (being God's great gift to scan)  
 To take from all no one by authority can ;  
 As who say any one man's authority,  
 Shall not, or should not, lose all men's liberty.

Further (he saith) one man's judgment is subdued,  
 To ill effects sooner than many can be,  
 As one bucket of water (in reason viewed)  
 May sooner be poisoned, we in reason see,  
 Than may a pool or a pond, and more, saith  
 he, [range,  
 Though one crane guide all, wherever cranes  
 Yet now this one, then that one, they oftentimes  
 change,

[N.iii.v.]

Which example partly doth your part appal,  
 For it as much may a senate signify  
 As one, one time chosen, all times to rule all ;  
 And where all bees follow one bee unchangeably,  
 Yet is that bee of a more excellency,  
 And of another kind than th'other bees are,  
 As the shepherd above the herd he did declare.

This last sample moveth choice of one ruler in place,

Of a more excellent kind than the rest be.

The said learned man (quoth the spider) in this case,

Replying to your clerk's reasons, this saith he :  
First, where your clerk saith one wight's au-  
thority

Cannot take all from liberty, this man sayeth  
'Tis not liberty, to live as man's will weigheth.

But to live in th'ordinance of good laws ;  
And the order of nature (saith he) assigneth  
Some to serve, some to rule, as aptness draws.  
The weak wit, strong of body, to service in-  
clineth ;

The witty learnéd head, reason toward rule  
combineth ;

And a king, called in scripture God's anointed,  
Hath (of God) gifts above the rest appointed.

God promiseth to rule the hearts of kings,  
Which gift showeth a king above the rest,  
And where it is more hard (by your clerk's  
sayings)

To corrupt many than one, so our clerk wit-  
nessed

More easy to find one good than many thus  
'sessed,

Th'argument of these two, and our clerk anon  
Choked your clerk with one reason joined here  
upon.

[N.iv.r.]

These three kinds of commonwealth he tried :  
Of a king, of the peers, and of commons last.  
In which as there may be three good rulings  
weighed,

So may be in these three, three ill rulings cast.  
 In rule of a king, tyranny may blow blast;  
 In peers, usurping; in few commons govern-  
 ance,  
 All to be governors may themselves advance.

Now whose contrary is worst (saith he) that's  
 best.

But tyranny is worst of these three, ergo,  
 Rule or reign of a king is best, manifest.  
 This is the conclusion of our clerk, and so  
 Th'argument (in effect) endeth without word  
 mo.

Which for rule preferred in a senate or  
 prince, [vince.  
 For one or many rulers, doth thy part con-

Sir (quoth the fly) these old clerk's clerkly say-  
 ing,

The repeating thereof let us leave off quite,  
 And fall we to reason of weighty weighing,  
 Experience, herein seen in our own sight,  
 On whose side these or these like cases run  
 right.

Be it (quoth the spider) but, ere we enter that,  
 Hear me clear a case that might displease some-  
 what.

In that we (in this case) draw near to compare  
 A spider to a king and flies to a senate,  
 Conjectures that captious or curious are  
 (If cause shall to them our talk communicate)  
 May chance to conject that we two derogate  
 Those two estates, in that we two do devise  
 To couple kings and peers with spiders and  
 flies.

But witness thou with me as I will with thee,  
 That for my part I know, and for thine I trow,  
 We no whit mean those states embased to be  
 By our talk, as a king in property to show  
 Like a spider, or comparison to grow  
 In flies and a senate for property of flies,  
 Most rude of us; not so rude that enterprise.

Sir (quoth the fly) as you here for yourself say,  
 So may you here assuredly for me swear,  
 This example mean I to respect no way,  
 But only th'order of rule that those states bear.  
 And so resembling them and us, I whilere,  
 Intended, by way of example, to treat.  
 And do so (quoth the spider) an end to beat.

Then (with your favour) have at it (quoth the  
 fly)  
 Passing from all former clerkly argument,  
 To our own experience familiarly.  
 For flies government, I'll show good reason  
 bent  
 By sample of a senate standing in extent  
 At this present day from hundreds of years  
 past,  
 To this day prospering, and so like to last.

Itself being but a city, doth yet possess  
 Kingdoms far from it, in civil order such  
 As no king hath one realm in more quietness.  
 Just justice goeth forth there, whoever gruch,  
 Their people obedient, few other so much.  
 This sample of senate for flies' rule I say,  
 Against one spider, or one king, here I lay.

[O.i.r.]

The most (quoth the spider) that this maketh  
 for thee,  
 Is that that senate ruleth as well as a king;  
 To which one senate (for more there none be)  
 Many kings, in many realms, have sole govern-  
 ing, [proving,  
 Each one of whose governance, all (or most),  
 In both kinds of commonwealth, since they  
 began,  
 As good as that one senate, scan who can scan.

One king's rule as good as one senate's rule is,  
 Compareth herein (for rule) both our parts  
 even,  
 And many kings ruling so, the number in this  
 Showeth thy side to the worst shore to be  
 driven;  
 And by one reason more, more weakness is  
 given  
 Unto thy part, which plainly shall appear  
 In these my next words, now following here.

Although those senators in sundry respects,  
 Seem equal for governance in open show,  
 Yet in other sundry respects proof directs,  
 Show of one among all above all to grow.  
 One hath of all chief place and reverence, we  
 know, [stand,  
 In whose estate stay of the rest doth most  
 Having voice as much as twain in his own  
 hand.

In many and most things preëminence he hath,  
 Most like to kingly superiority;  
 Two parts of three, in senate's guiding path,

Are drawn out of kingly rule, in property,  
 Without which to govern well it will not be.  
 Thus a senate's rule, wherein ye your brag  
     brought,  
 Lacking aid of a king's rule (ye see) doth  
     nought.

[O.i.v.]

I could (quoth the fly) say more, but I will not.  
 This case standeth not in our case principally,  
 This law, or that law, what law stand, it skill  
     not,

So the law and ministers give justice justly.  
 My cause is so just, that no just law fear I,  
 Nor for every fault in laws or lawyers guessed;  
 To remove laws and lawyers, I think not best.

Corruption in laws, or ministers of laws,  
 I wish us to redress rather than remove  
 Either laws or lawyers without weighty cause,  
 The case upon light cause if we should oft  
     preve,  
 Where it should ease one it might twenty ag-  
     grieve;  
 Devisers in such things may sooner devise  
 To show ten mischiefs than shape two reme-  
     dies.

Thou sayest well (said the spider) but to re-  
     volve,  
 Th'impediment in law of fond fly jurors,  
 I can no way other way resolve  
 But with them, and all pelting procurers,  
 To be quite cut off. As lawless enurers  
 Of verdicts false or foolish in this or that,  
 Sometimes they care not, most times they know  
     not what.

And sure (I think) this sore might be salved  
soon,

Or the smart much eased, did discretion devise,  
And diligence put in ure things meet to be done.  
But to lords, laws, lawyers, homage and juries,  
Corrupt friendship, thou laidest erst here in  
such wise

As it generally appeareth to repine  
Against all courts, as much as against mine.

[O.ii.r.]

As much? yea, and so much more, sir, that,  
except,

Your own self, no wight in your court I there  
touched;

Your court of all officers is so clean swept  
That none officer in that court can be couched,  
But yourself, for yourself hath yourself  
avouched,

Plaintiff, pleader, juror, Judge, and jailor.

Stop, fly! (what) from a reasoner to a railer?

I cry you mercy, Sir, if this do displease;  
I reverse and revoke it straight, for I have  
As small appetite as I shall have small ease  
To move you. Well, since thou forgiveness  
dost crave,

Stand up, fly, I forgive even as God forgave.  
And how our said case (by custom) shall be  
tried,

Let us yet once again search how to provide.

Concerning that provision, sir (quoth the fly)  
If we here (in this your present court) did make  
Agreement to try this determinately,

Though I hope (as I hope) I should no wrong  
take,  
Yet humbly I beseech you, for my mind's sake,  
Since my heartless heart against this trial  
swells,  
To grant to try this case some way, somewhere  
else.



[O.ii.v.]

¶ They agree to be tried by arbitrament,  
whether all or how many holes in all windows  
belong to spiders, and how many to flies, the  
spider choosing for his part the ant or pismire,  
the fly choosing for his side the butterfly.  
Whereupon they, th'one couple in one part,  
and th'other couple in another part, talk to-  
gether forthwith.

Cap. 28.



[O.iii.r.]

**N**OW (quoth the spider) by this cross of  
ten bones,  
There liveth not thy like (for a fly) I trow;  
For tongue wit thou art the fly for the nonce.

But go to : let us toward end some way grow.  
I showed my mind last, wherefore thy mind  
now show,  
What way (as thou thinkest) we may yet best  
purvey  
To knit up this knot, without further delay.  
The best way in my mind, when all ways are  
cast,  
Is that one (quoth the fly) that I touched twice,  
To have been our trial in all cases past,  
Which was, to put the whole in compromise.  
Fly ! this last one case to be tried in that wisc?  
I grant thee. I thank you (quoth the fly) pray-  
ing,  
That we may name our daysmen in this daying.

I name (quoth the spider) a cousin of mine,  
Pierce pismire called Antony, ant otherwise,  
Of person small, of wit great upright and fine.  
And I (quoth the fly) whatever hap shall rise,  
My grandsire Bartilmew butterfly devise ;  
Of body big, of wit and speech blunt and plain.  
Well (quoth the spider) agree we on these  
twain.

They did so, and forthwith there lighted by  
chance,  
Hard by the cobweb's side, the butterfly ;  
Wherewith one of the young spiders did ad-  
vance,  
At th'old spider's commandment, in haste to  
hie,  
For the ant to repair to him by and by.  
Speed came so to pass, that at th'old spider's  
hand, [to stand.  
The young spider, out of hand, brought th'ant

[O.iii.v.]

The spider to the ant, and fly to butterfly  
 (after words of greeting) declare, that they are  
 chosen their arbiters herein, wherein the ant  
 and butterfly promise to do their best, and they  
 then anon draw all four together in (or at) the  
 cobweb.

Cap. 29.



[O.iv.r.]

THE ant to the spider made curtsey low,  
 Wherewithal the spider to the ant did  
 draw,  
 Smiling and becking on him, in most loving  
 show.

They shook hands mannerly as ever I saw.  
But for flies, as *Stans puer ad mensam* showeth  
law

For making of curtsy or shaking of hands,  
Butterflies pardon flies, bound hand and foot in  
bands.

The spider, as of use in talk new entered,  
(Friends ask of friends the state of their  
friends friendly),

Asked how his cousins (th'ant's father and  
mother) did,

His brothers, sisters, with all kin and ally.

Th'ant said they did well, and, in like words  
hearty,

Asked him how his aunt spider and all theirs  
fared; [declared.]

The spider, with thanks to th'ant, their healths

The fly of the butterfly, with tears tender,

Asked to know his grandam butterfly's estate,  
With all uncles and aunts, of their engender.

The butterfly said well, and bid him animate  
To be of good cheer false heart to captivate.

Reason then ebbing, tears of nature's flowing,  
To show their griefs as reason might make  
showing.

The spider to th'ant, and fly to butterfly,  
Discoursed their griefs apart, and how they  
therein,

Refusing sundry ways of end, finally

Chose them twain for arbiters some end to win.  
And since th'one twain and th'other twain are  
of kin,

Th'one chooseth th'one, th'other chooseth  
th'other. [t'other.]

Both promised their best, the t'one and the

[O.iv.v.]

The spider declareth, and the fly granteth the issue to be, that all flies claim (in freehold) all holes in all windows to be theirs by custom, and spiders claim all holes with all parts of all windows to be their freehold by custom. And after talk between them therein had, th'ant requireth full instruction of the two parties to their two arbiters.

Cap. 30.



[P.i.r.]

THE spider and fly thanking the other both,  
They four thereupon drawing together all,  
The spider directly to the matter goeth.

Cousin ant and fellow butterfly, ye shall  
 Understand that we twain do you twain now  
 call,  
 Not to weigh all cases in which we contend,  
 But one, on which one all seem to depend.

The fly claimeth by common custom beyond  
 mind,  
 All holes in all lattices flies' freehold to be,  
 And spiders (saith he) by custom are assigned,  
 To build in sides or in top; whereto, mark ye,  
 I say that custom awardeth all windows free  
 At spiders' wills without that any flies  
 Have any such right, by custom's warrantise.

That this is our issue, we do both agree,  
 And upon this issue we be both agreed  
 That you two by arbitrament shall decree,  
 What custom hath herein directly decreed.  
 Is it thus, fly? (quoth th'ant). Yea (quoth the  
 fly) indeed.  
 As conscience in you twain for us twain shall  
 try [I.  
 How custom doth stand, so (for my part) stand

Thou seemest (quoth the spider) a costermor-  
 ger,  
 Conscience every handwhile thou dost cry.  
 I must (quoth the fly) see some token stronger  
 Ere I can suppose you of that mystery.  
 I call not for conscience more commonly  
 Than you speak of it sealed, fly, I told thee  
 erst,  
 Cause why, that conscience at last end should  
 be pursed.

[P.i.v.]

That's now (quoth the fly) if these two now take  
end,

As I hope they shall, but here me thinketh I  
smell

That your cast is conscience thus to suspend,  
First till th'end, and then at th'end fair and  
well

Cut conscience off, conscience so to expel,  
As when all is done, conscience may safely say  
And swear that conscience came not here this  
day.

Then conscience or I the t'one shall be for-  
sworn; [four

Reason, law, custom, and conscience, these  
To be our grounds in trial I swear beforne.

Then (quoth the fly) in last end of this last hour,  
Let conscience come in to save that oath of  
your.

What thing can conscience do here, fly, sayest  
thou?

Three things, sir (said the fly) which I will  
tell you.

First, conscience as even balance may evenly  
weigh [flies;

What custom yieldeth to spiders, and what to  
Second, conscience may weigh what reason  
can lay,

What good and what ill custom doth exercise  
In either part. Thirdly, conscience may devise  
To allow the good and disallow the ill.

Wherenon these two may award as conscience  
will.

These two, fly (as my meaning was to take them),  
 We choose daysmen to try this by reason clear,  
 But (not arbiters), chancellors thou dost make them,  
 By conscience to judge how much custom doth here,  
 And what good or ill, in custom doth appear.  
 Last case of which twain (by thee craftily couched),  
 In th'issue that we join on is no whit touched.

[P.ii.r.]

The point that we pitch on to try out the sooth,  
 By reason (not scrupulous conscience), is this,—

Nor what custom is, but what custom doth;  
 How good or how ill custom itself is,  
 Is another farther case. Which, fly, I wis,  
 When we shall try, by conscience with reason,  
 It will bring small brag for thy side to season.

For fine cousin ant, and goodman butterfly,  
 What interest custom doth give to him and me,  
 How much or how little in windows low or high,

As you by reason agree, so I agree.  
 To this asked the butterfly, Fly, what say ye?  
 Since who may not as he will, must as he may.  
 I say (said the fly) as master spider doth say.

There saidst thou wisely (said the spider) and note,  
 Thou shalt by that saying no damage sustain.  
 If reason win thee this case every iote,  
 Conscience (by reason) must me straight constrain

T'obey reason's award at hands of these twain.  
 And pass they with me, I promise mine assent  
 To use the gain as conscience yieldeth extent.  
 So said and so done (quoth the butterfly), in  
     faith,  
 Son fly, this is of master spider well weighed.  
 Yea, sir, (quoth the fly) I here well what he  
     saith,  
 God reward his mastership; it is well said.  
 Pleaseth you (quoth th'ant) evidence may be  
     laid.  
 By yourselves or other, whereby we twain may  
 Perceive (in reason) whereto custom doth  
     weigh.

[P.ii.v.]

Yea (quoth the spider) cousin, come we hither.  
 They as far as they list withdrew themselves  
     quite.

The butterfly and fly, drawing together,  
 As far, not as they list, as far as they might,  
 They two telling their tales, as I shall recite.  
 Which two tales though I, as in one time hid  
     here, [appear.  
 Yet first th'one and then th'other, must here  
 Though two ears in one instant two tales hear  
     may,  
 One tongue in one instant two tales cannot tell;  
 Since th'one of these two tales must stand here  
     in stay,  
 Till th'other be told, I think it will do well  
 The fly's and the butterfly's talk to expel,  
 Or suspend till the spider's task with the ant,  
 Ye may understand, which is next apparent.

[*The tailpiece as on page 28 occurs here in the original.*]

[P.iii.r.]

¶They (in couples separate again) declare each  
how he would have his arbiter handle his part.  
And first is here told in their persons the tale  
of the spider to the ant.

Cap. 31.



[P.iii.v.]

**C**OUSIN ant (quoth the spider) that ye be  
wise

It is to me known, whereto all folk do know  
That unto the wise few words at full suffice;  
And to your wisdom I doubt not your show  
Of friendship naturally to me to grow;  
For ye know as we differ far in stature,  
So we in kindred join nigh by nature.

Precedent wherein sought, what old records  
carry,

Shall show no record of solemn solemnity,  
That ever spider and ant did yet marry,  
Which growth (I say) of kindred, not of enmity,  
Did I (in you), by ingrate indemnity,  
Doubt here wisdom's judgment or nature's  
kindness,

I were a beast of beetle-headed blindness.

Which two in their workings to give or take  
right,

Nature worketh friendly, wisdom worketh  
surely.

Though right in each cause seem the post of  
most might,

Yet want of wisdom (whose policy purely)  
In sentence or semblance, stern or demurely,  
Should set forth that right, might, in conclu-  
sion quick,

Thwight that mill-post of right to a pudding  
prick.

As if *Crossum caput*, like an ass in a case,  
Setting forth a right homily in rude terms bare  
A witty learned head, that right in that place  
Did finely pronounce those two tales should de-  
clare,

Forty pence difference, in right to compare.

One tale in two tellers, with one intent told,  
May differ in show, as doth brass and fine gold.

[P.iv.r.]

And wisdom's sure drifts had, if nature's  
friendship lack,

To take, hear, and tell that tale in friendly  
wise, [wrack;

That right with that wisdom may yet run to

Thus wisdom to work surely by policies,  
And nature to work friendly, both must arise  
To join in one in friends by friends required,  
To obtain things at hands of friends desired.

Which policy and friendship, where they are  
knit

Against parties to try things in strife growing,  
They call craft and corruption every whit;  
But policy and friendship with parties showing  
Those parties praise both with open mouth  
blowing; [them;

Both standing against folks, folks daily accuse  
Both standing with folks, folks hourly use  
them.

But to show our case out of accusation,  
In putting policy and friendship in ure,  
Mark this short circumstance in approbation.  
Compromise, the end of causes to allure,  
Two sorts of election in course doth procure  
In choice of the chosen parties, (here mean I)  
To arbitrate all debates indifferently.

One is, that the two parties in strife meved  
Do choose arbiters, to them both indifferent;  
Th'other is that either party grieved,  
Doth choose for himself such as he knoweth  
bent,

To take end or leave end, as he will assent.  
The first way of both (though it the best way  
be)

It cannot be had between the fly and me,

[P.iv.v.]  
In this case present, among spiders and flies,  
We all can no one indifferent provide.  
Affinity or affection doth so devise

That all be parties on th'one or th'other side.  
But might (and should) this case this first way  
be tried,

Then might ye honestly lean partially  
To neither side, by friendship nor policy.

Howbeit this other case bringeth this other  
cause,

The fly, for himself, and myself, for me,  
This choice have chosen, so that this thus  
draws

Another myself I choose you here to be.  
Whereby in all friendly policy (ye see),  
Of honesty to stick to my side just,  
Not only ye may, but also ye must.

And (as I said), I doubt not but ye will,  
And pray ye do. But promise formerly,  
Of known reward at end, to flee the ill  
Of suspect bribery; though I presently  
Rate not reward, yet if hereafter I  
May you requite in pleasure one or other,  
Then think yourself as nigh it as another.

Sir, said the ant, your rated ruled reward,  
Now or at end, if I herein appease you,  
Is not the thing that I so much regard,  
But at the end as ye see how I ease you.  
I say no more, but use me as it please you.  
Cousin, well said (said then the spider) and sith  
This point is past, pass we now to the pith.

[Q.i.r.]

All holes in all windows (as the fly saith),  
Are flies' freehold, and that we spiders hold,  
Right nought by right, but sides and tops on  
heith.

And we (say I) hold all, thus to be told,—  
 Holes, sides, and tops, broad, narrow, deep,  
 and sholde.

Upon which issue you two must first hear,  
 And after judge which side bringeth proof most  
 clear.

Wherein for me, of ancient parentage  
 Ye shall hear spiders speak, both sage and  
 wise;  
 And on the fly's behalf, here now in gage,  
 There will come forth a sort of forked-tailed  
 flies,  
 That will not stick to tell a hundred thousand  
 lies,  
 And say and swear that they say true; howbeit,  
 Ye will (I doubt not) trust them as is meet.

And when ye herein have done what ye may  
 To make our evidence shine clear in show,  
 And darkened theirs, your wisdom shall sure  
 weigh,  
 The gross rude butterfly to end to grow  
 What way ye will. And thus, for high and  
 low,  
 After words great and many, where few might  
 seem fit,  
 Into your hands the matter I commit.

Uncle (quoth the ant) I perceive your mind  
 At full, and shall at full do all my best  
 Wherein to do you good: if I can nought find,  
 Yet shall ye (for me) stand harmless at least.  
 Upon this conclusion these twain did rest.  
 And now between the fly and the butterfly  
 What way was had ensueth ensuingly.

[Q.i.v.]

*The tale of the fly to the butterfly how he shall use the fly's part. Which done, the arbiters withdraw themselves toward the top of the window.*

Cap. 32.



[Q.ii.r.]

**G**OODY grandfather, since we two (said the fly)  
One flesh and blood by nature's working are,  
In that I from you descend lineally,  
As in degrees our pedigrees declare,  
And that nature naturally taketh care  
To see success of her succeeded birds,  
I will not length this piece with painted words.

But nature's zeal I set to intercess  
 To you, for me, without more words of me,  
 To do your best in this my deep distress,  
 Wherein what way to work as I best see,  
 That shall I show. But ere we so far be,  
 Hear me disclose (for our purposéd cause),  
 A necessary brief conceived clause.

We hear and see gifts of nature are divers ;  
 Some be fair, some tall, some have strength,  
     some wit,  
 Some in science excellent contrivers,  
 Some have small wit, and have much truth  
     with it,  
 With many more than now to move were fit.  
 And this move I to move here only now,  
 Difference in gifts between the ant and you.

The ant hath gift of right good wit (no doubt)  
 And thereto (for an ant) learned excellently ;  
 And you have gift of plain[t]s stern and stout,  
 Not being given so much ingeniously  
 To learned judgment ; and yet this know I  
 No wight can prove from hence to England's  
     end  
 That ever ye brake promise with your friend.

[Q.ii.v.]

But that ye would and durst perform the same ;  
 And this to this in you right well is known,—  
 A ground once in your head, fastened in frame,  
 Let learned lawyers pipe up trumpets blown  
 Of rules in law to rule you as their own,  
 Yet shall their reasons no whit make ye start  
 From that ground on your or on your friend's  
     part.

Which property is worth ten thousand mark  
 In you to me, in case of compromise,  
 For which against the ant, that cunning clerk,  
 Mine arbiter I did you here devise  
 To hold your hold in blunt assuréd wise ;  
 Either this matter wholly to recover,  
 Or save (at least) my side from giving over.

The ant is sharp and fine, as ye are blunt and  
 gross ;  
 The ant hath circumspection, ye have none ;  
 You packstaff plain, the ant crafty and close ;  
 The ant civil, you sturdy as the stone.  
 This said brief blunt and sharp comparison  
 Shall show who sheweth most brag to stint this  
 strife,  
 The blunt whetting whetstone, or sharp  
 whetted knife.

To this the butterfly said : Fly, son mine,  
 The gross blunt whetting whetstone fear thou  
 not  
 To match this whetted penknife, sharp and fine.  
 Tell thou to me plainly what is the knot  
 That I shall knit or unknit in this plot ;  
 And th'ant shall with a tabor take a wat  
 As soon as make me shrink from thee in that.

[Q.iii.r.]

Sir (said the fly) our issue which ye heard  
 To ripe remembrance, hear yet once again.  
 I say all holes in windows are referred,  
 In tenure of freehold, to us t'appertain,  
 All spiders in sides and in tops to remain.  
 Which he denieth, affirming they and he  
 Hold all parts in all windows in tenure free.

In which two sides you two the truth must try,  
 And then determine, as reason can decree,  
 Upon which side this shall by custom lie,  
 Wherein ye shall have flies to speak for me,  
 Sage, wise, learned, and well spoken as can be;  
 And for the spider's part, it is no doubt  
 Of spiders there will be a spiteful rout.

The knot herein which I would have you knit,  
 Is this,—either do me good, or do none ill;  
 If in this matter ye can win no whit,  
 Then lose right nought, but let it stand even  
 still

As it erst stood. And if th'ant no way will  
 Give any place, come, hearken in your ear.  
 Wherein he whispered words, what I wist  
 ne'er.

Whereat the spider cast eye to them both.  
 Wherewith the butterfly from the fly flieth,  
 And the ant from the spider away goeth.  
 Each one of whom (anon) the other espieth,  
 And each of both to other hastily hieth.  
 The spider straight into his house stepped  
 stoutly;

The fly fell on knees to his book devoutly.

[Q.iii.v.]

Th'ant and the butterfly together drew  
 To th'extreme part of the window on the top  
 side,  
 And after saluting in their manner due,  
 Both studying how th'entry should be first ap-  
 plied,  
 They both, casting their eyes about, espied.  
 On th'one side spiders approaching, six or  
 seven,  
 And on th'other side, flies ten or eleven.

Neither sort the other ought saluted they,  
But both sorts to th'arbiters made curtsey low.  
The ant prayed both parties in their approach  
to stay,  
Till the butterfly and he (in talk) might know  
And agree what way of proceeding should  
grow.  
With this they all stepped back and there  
stayed,  
Whereupon th'ant to the butterfly said.



[Q.iv.r.]  
 ¶The ant and the butterfly being met in the top of the window, certain spiders on their one side, and certain flies on their other side, whom th'arbiters cause to stand back while they two talk together.

Cap. 33.



[Q.iv.v.]

**B**EFORE we further wade, master butterfly—

No master, sir; I am but a yeoman (quoth he).  
 That's no matter (said th'ant) as the case doth lie;

But, gentleman or yeoman, whatever ye be,  
 Since we two come hither these two to agree,  
 Let us be agreed on the next and best way  
 To bring them agreed, in matter here to say.

Our way wherein (as thinketh me) is this.  
 We both must banish all partiality,  
 That by corrupt affection engendered is,  
 By affinity, or consanguinity,  
 So that we clearly cleve unto equity.  
 As of these two neither of either shall  
 Prove us, or either of us, unequal.

Nay (by my father's soul), said the butterfly,  
 I will play no whit of *venum mecum* his part,  
 Hold with the hare and run with the hound will  
     not I;  
 Such reasons as out of this blunt brain may  
     start  
 For my friend, run they right run they over-  
     thwart,  
 Out will I pour them, and in God's name,  
 For your friend, as ye see cause, do you the  
     same.

These two tales (in these two persons) seemed  
     here told,  
 In th'one of plainness, in th'other of policy.  
 The butterfly spake his thought (as he much  
     would)  
 Th'ant contrary talked dissimilately.  
 His moving the butterfly to indifference  
 (Himself showing a show to be indifferent)  
 Seemed moved, for this craft covered intent.

[R.i.r.]

The ant's drift was the butterfly to drive  
From affectionate standing on the fly's side,  
Indifferently to stand, while himself contrive  
To be partial with the spider, which applied,  
Might (thought the ant) to the butterfly un-  
spied,

Draw him to withdraw some part of affection,  
Fore bent in his breast, for the fly's protection.

But when the butterfly, like a stiff-necked cur,  
(As ye have heard) made answer unto the ant,  
So that this way would not the butterfly stir,  
Th'ant (on this plain song having shift of de-  
scant)

Asked the butterfly : Come we this instant  
To help the spider and fly to take end?  
Yea, sir (said the butterfly) : that I intend.

If I for the spider and you for the fly  
Show ourselves not arbiters but parties,  
Reasoning each for each affectionately;  
What end between us twain for them can rise  
More than themselves in themselves can devise?  
I cannot tell (quoth the butterfly), howbeit,  
Hark what way is best we take (after my wit).

You, reasoning for your friend and I for my  
friend,  
Upon our evidence to this issue laid,  
If my reasons seem better than yours at end,  
You allowing them above your own, here  
weighed,  
Or your the better reasons in my head stayed,  
I allowing them likewise above mine own,  
Reason may set end, and time show end, well  
grown.

[R.i.v.]

Upon this they both were agreed anon  
The spiders and flies on both sides to call near.  
Both being agreed that the ant should propone,  
The spiders now standing on the right hand to  
hear,  
The flies on the left side, as nigh did appear.  
Both ant and butterfly (each in a chair set)  
To declare the case the ant his tongue hath  
whet.



[R.ii.7.]

¶Th'ant declaring the cause of that meeting,  
the spiders and flies acknowledging the same,  
and that they come to give evidence, the flies  
are appointed to depart while the spiders first  
show what they can say for their part.

Cap. 34.



[R.ii.v.]

KINSFOLK spiders and friends flies, I  
doubt no whit  
But in this terrible trembling tragedy  
Between the spider and fly, in cobweb knit,

Ye know the mischance mischanced lately,  
And how those chances chanced to chance,  
whereby

The spider's palace is deeply perished,  
And the fly's person deadly perilled.

Also (I suppose) ye know that we twain,  
I for the spider and he for the fly,  
Are chosen arbiters such end t'obtain  
As evidence shall show, both sides to try.  
Which to show (I deem) ye appear presently.  
Said one spider first, and then one fly, All this,  
We know, and to give evidence our coming is.

This known (quoth th'ant) doubting whether  
ye know

How far our authority stretcheth here  
To meddle in this matter, hear me show.  
Number and weight of strifes, cloudy and clear,  
Between these twain many and great appear;  
Of all which authority have we none  
To touch in this talk, save only this one.

The fly claimeth all holes in all windows,  
To pass and repass, to be free for flies all;  
Alleging that spiders (by all old shows),  
In tops and sides have place especial.  
The spider claimeth the whole in general.  
To hearing whereof, we our award would knit,  
What part each part shall have, from all to  
no whit.

[R.iii.1.

Sir (said the spider and fly) that erst had said,  
This know we, and have purveyed evidence  
As clear for each part as each part can see  
weighed.

Then (quoth the ant) for our intelligence,  
Will ye, friend butterfly, that the flies go hence,  
While we hear the spiders speak? Yea (quoth  
he);

Cousins flies, stand back till ye calléd be.

The flies stepped back, the spiders forward  
drew,

Standing before those two in their chairs set  
Declaration to whom what they herein knew  
Was devised and determined ere they there  
met.

Wherein for entry to let longer let,  
The butterfly straight entering as here ensueth,  
Th'ant provoketh the spiders to speak the  
truth.



[R.iii.v.]  
 ¶ After a few words between the ant and butterfly, one spider, as mought be for all, declareth to those two th'arbiters all evidence that all spiders for their part can devise. And that done, the spiders are commanded away, and the flies bidden to approach. Cap. 35.



[R.iv.r.]  
**M**ASTERS (or lords) spiders, what shall I call ye?  
 In things here now to talk hark well this one thing :  
 At my blunt behaviour, bark ye or bawl ye,

If ye bring in sophistry or book learning  
To blind mine eyes with, I give you plain  
warning,  
Tom troth will not be wound that way. And  
thereby  
Be warned to talk truly and homelily.

They will do so (quoth the ant) I dare say;  
So will the flies then (quoth th'other) I dare  
swear.

Then (quoth th'ant) without more delated delay,  
What ye spiders can speak, speak while we  
give ear.

With this, one spider (as all agreed were),  
Standing foremost, and as a bolt upright,  
Soberly said, with curtsey low as he might:—

May it (masters) like you, a spider am I,  
Of such years as no living flies years may,  
Witness (by remembrance) my full age; for  
why?

I took life in this world, (old spiders would say)  
Just in the leap year, before the ill May day.  
My parents (as I am) were black nebbed and  
bald;

The longlived stock of spiders they were called.

By part of my which parents, this I gather,—  
In their times, worshipful spiders (though I  
say it),

My father, grandfather, and great grand-  
father, [it,

Would say, as they heard elder spiders weigh  
That every window, hung it, stood it, or lay it.  
All parts of the same, in lowest and highest,  
Were spiders' freehold, both farthest and  
nighest.

[R.iv.v.]

And ever have been (said they) at will to build  
 In part or in all, and that they could not know  
 That ever fly (of right) any part there held.  
 These few words of forefathers spiders make  
 show,

In all parts of all windows the right to grow,  
 On our part, the contrary whereof to weigh,  
 No spider hath heard any spider ought say.

Say all ye spiders thus? (quoth th'ants). Yea  
 (quoth they).

Have ye heard (quoth the butterfly) any wight  
 Say ought herein saving spiders? quoth they,  
 Nay.

Have ye (quoth th'ant) ought else in this to re-  
 cite?

Yea (quoth one spider) standing behind all  
 quite;

I have a counter verse to sing in this place,  
 Which shall be countered with the flies face to  
 face.

Ye shall (quoth the butterfly) sing that verse  
 anon.

But we must hear the flies indifferently,  
 As we have heard you, till which time be ye  
 gone.

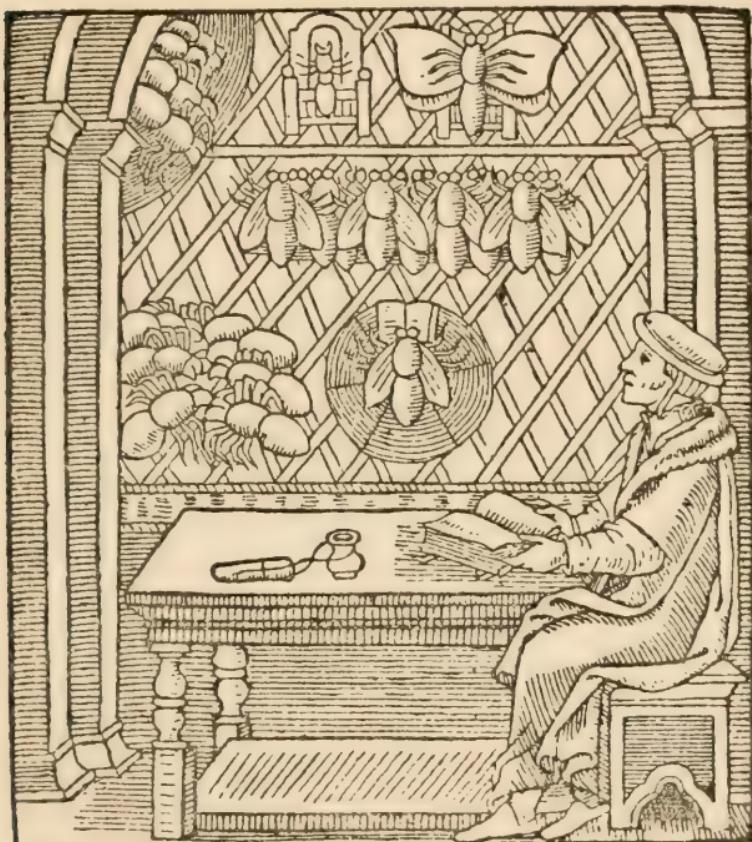
They stepping back, the flies forthwith soberly  
 Stood in their place. Th'arbiters glancingly,  
 Ere the flies ought said in their repairing near,  
 Had between themselves these words, which  
 ye shall hear.

[*The tailpiece as on page 38 occurs here in  
 the original.*]

[S.i.r.]

Upon a short talk between the arbiters, one fly, spokes-fly for all flies, discloseth all evidence for their part. Wherewith the flies, at commandment, depart aside.

Cap. 36.



S.i.v.

THE spider's tale (quoth th'ant) seemeth  
a choking choke-plum  
Against flies. Ere ye (quoth the butterfly)  
grutch  
Against any part, *audum altum paltum*.

HEY. III.

M

This term, set far from the Latin, and more  
such,  
Learned in the school of ignorance, he spake  
much,  
And understood little. But this being stayed,  
An ancient fly stood forth, and thus to them  
said.

My masters arbiters, I am a fly  
Of such age as spiders few or none may boast.  
My father's hand-writing (for witness) have I  
That I was bred in the year of the great frost,  
Before the great sweat, when many flies were  
crossed,  
Out of the book of life, who by extreme cold  
Were frozen to death, midaged, young, and  
old.

In all which days to this day I have heard flies  
say :  
All holes in all windows, where they stood or  
stand,  
Have been (and be) flies' freehold, as their  
highway,  
To pass and repass, and that the spiders' band  
Owners of the sides and tops only are  
scanned.  
Whereto I nor no fly (I dare verify)  
Ever heard any fly say contrary.

Flies (quoth the butterfly), take ye this tale  
true?  
Yea (quoth they). Know ye aught (quoth  
th'ant) but by flies?  
Nay (quoth they). Forth (quoth the butterfly)  
pursue,

Can you (or any of you) aught else devise  
 Whereby further light in your right may arise?  
 Yea, sir, said one fly, then standing all behind,  
 To the spiders' teeth anon, I'll tell my mind.

[S.ii.r.]

That shall ye do (quoth th'ant); but, friend butterfly,  
 Will ye first require them to withdraw aside,  
 While you and I some part of this past may  
 try?  
 Hence (quoth the butterfly); wherewith thence  
 they hied.  
 They twain then only there, themselves they  
 applied,  
 Each one with other, together to consult  
 What fruit out of this erst said their brains  
 could bolt.

Ere either of other did herein ought break,  
 Th'ant devised what way best to enter it;  
 The butterfly studied not what words to speak,  
 But to speak with voice clear, he coughed and  
 he spit,  
 Till his voice was much more clear than his wit.  
 And yet far from witless, but plain blunt gross-  
 ness  
 Showed his words ofttimes to show witless  
 looseness.

[*The tailpiece as on page 28 occurs here in the original.*]

[S.ii.v.]  
 ¶The arbiters (in debating th'evidence on both parts given) cannot otherwise agree, but that the same weigheth even as much for the tone part as for the tother, at end whereof they call again all the said sort.

Cap. 37.



[S.iii.r.]

**S**AY (said th'ant) your opinion uprightly :  
 What weigheth this evidence on both sides,  
 think you?

To try which side showeth best (quoth the butterfly),

These words as much matter for flies to allow  
As for spiders. So do they (quoth th'ant)  
avow,

As much matter in words to allow, in likewise,  
In spiders for spiders, as in flies for flies.

And more, for th'one half well nigh that spiders  
claim

The flies do grant, but spiders grant unto flies  
No part of theirs, which is to the flies a maim.  
The flies' own tale sides and tops of windows  
tries

To be the spiders' by customs warrantise.

Whereto the spider's tale for the flies' part  
weighed,

Weigheth no hair's breadth in windows for the  
flies' aid.

Spiders (quoth the butterfly) show themselves  
here

More siding to their side than flies to theirs are.  
As flies indifferently make custom to appear  
Sides and tops of windows for spiders' share,  
And that flies (by custom) the holes theirs do  
'clare

So should spiders indifferently consider  
To lay (as flies do) both customs together.

Spiders (quoth th'ant) take those customs far  
unlike,

Theirs to grow of right, flies' of usurpation.

If (quoth the butterfly) the flies do here pike  
That quarrel to spiders, in custom's usation,  
That is tit for tat in this altercation.

So that for any thing any party can get,  
Both parties in all things yet on even hand are  
set.

[S.iii.v.]

But to try how good or how ill custom is  
 Is no part of our charge; ye know we must try  
 How much or how little custom doth in this,  
 Preferring or debarring claim of each party  
 Wherein, for all laid here yet again say I,  
 Flies lay (where reason and equalness be  
 guiders),

As much for flies, as spiders lay for spiders.

Well (quoth th'ant) as we both heard both  
 parts apart,  
 So now let us both both parties together hear,  
 How we both between both parties can the hare  
 start.

Both agreed that all on both parts should ap-  
 pear.

They did so, and all on both sides settled near,  
 The ant declaring the pith of all yet wrought,  
 Entry to matter more, th'ant induction brought.



[S.iv.r.]

¶Th'ant sheweth to them all that th'evidence weighth to one effect on both sides, so that all resteth now upon knowledge which part to credit most. And upon that motion, one spider and one fly fall in argument to try the



same. Wherein is touched (partly) the properties of credence, worship, and honesty, they agreeing that credence standeth upon honesty, as thus,—as every spider or fly is honest, so is he credible. Which talk ended, they are all again sequestered.

Cap. 38.

[S.iv.v.]

FRIENDS all, ye all erst assembled in parties  
 twain,  
 Before us twain here for both parties have de-  
 clared  
 By the mouths of twain, two tales, which two  
 contain  
 One effect. For the matter self in regard,  
 The only difference in both being conferred,  
 Is this,—what one spider for all spiders layeth,  
 The self-same sentence one fly for all flies  
 sayeth.

As thus : that spider said all spiders have laid  
 All holes in all windows to be spiders' freehold ;  
 Which self saying that said fly (for all flies)  
 said

In few words, at full then, th'effect to unfold.  
 Both parties present, to this tale is to be told,  
 Some matter to try : what appearance may rise,  
 Which part we shall credit most, spiders or  
 flies.

With this, a well-spoken spider stepped in  
 place.

Saying : If comparison in credence grow,  
 Then must ye with us spiders rule this case.  
 Spiders have been and be worshipful, ye know.  
 And flies honest (quoth a witty fly) I trow,  
 And of credence; the property of majesty  
 Standeth not more by worship than by honesty,

Nor so much neither; as all kinds of flies  
 think,

No, no colour of cause of credence can stand,  
 Whereas worship with honesty doth not link,

And honesty without worship (skilfully scanned)  
 May have, and must have, credence at every hand. [lay,  
 If the spiders' worships for credence do here Flies' honesties shall spiders' worships outweigh.

[T.i.r.]

Were this gay couched case (quoth the spider) granted,  
 More credence for flies than for spiders might be guessed,  
 Which sheweth you to deem as you it avaunted,  
 That no spider, but all flies, are honest,  
 And all spiders worshipful, wherein ye expressed  
 Cause of credence, in flies' honesties to grow  
 Much more than in spiders' worships there may show.

Credence, honesty, and worship, thus take I,—  
 Credence in this word trust plainly term we may;

Honesty, virtue morally and civilly;  
 Worship, reverence, or estimation to say;  
 Honour is also reverence, as use doth weigh;  
 Honour and worship both one in use take we,  
 Save honour is reverence in the higher degree.

Now note that the full cause of credence or trust

Springeth and spreadeth out of virtue or honesty,

And honour, or worship, is duely discussed,  
 Due where virtue or honesty is, then see  
 Who is not honest, worshipful he cannot be;  
 For worship and honesty, th'one and th'other,  
 The t'one of the twain dependeth on the t'other.

What (quoth the fly) meaneth this circum-  
  quaque?

This (quoth the spider)—where ye (in your last  
  saying)

Separate in sunder worship and honesty,  
Worship to spiders and honesty to flies laying,  
Flies' credence above spiders' t'advance in  
  weighing,

Worship and honesty I join so that here  
Worshipful spiders be honest spiders clear.

[T.i.v.]

Honest spiders are worshipful (quoth the fly).  
By honesty, and credible too, no, nay;  
But where spiders' honesty standeth awry,  
Worship and credence stand awry too, I say.  
So (quoth the spider) be honesty away,  
The flies' credit standeth a-crook even as far  
As the spiders'; but let us touch this case now.

Grant here's a spider of honesty no whit,  
To whom admit a fly of great honesty,  
The spider (not the fly) to authority knit;  
Is not that spider, in authorised degree,  
More worshipful and credible taken to be  
Than that inferior fly? (Quoth the fly) No,  
Which ye shall hear, but first hear how your  
  words go.

Credence, honour, worship, or reverence,  
To virtue or honesty ye first avouched due;  
Last, authority ye bring in assistance,  
Th'unhonest authorised thereby t'ensue,  
In worship and credence. Yea (quoth he),  
  that's true.

And in touching that first of these two cases,  
I forgot this last, but both must have their  
  places.

As honour, or worship, and credence do depend  
Upon all that are honest, by honesty,  
So worship and credence in like case too bend  
On all in authority, by authority.

Nay (quoth the fly) (quoth the spider) friend,  
tell me,

Is not authority to be worshipped?

Yes, master (quoth the fly), or else God forbid.

[T.ii.1.

All authority not against the great God,  
In spiders under him placed as potentates,  
In them and their substitutes, that God hath  
bade

To be worshipped and obeyed in humble rates.  
But authority and authorised states,  
Cause of worship due to both, differ as far  
As Jericho and Jersey in joining jar.

Authority, for itself, worshipped is;  
Th'authorised, for good use of authority,  
Are duly reverenced, which good use if they  
miss,

Worship or reverence to them given none  
should be.

Yet there is (quoth the spider) we daily see  
Before th'authorised curtsey made as low  
To the ill as to the good, and more low, some  
trow.

That curtsey (quoth the fly) rightly directed,  
Runneth to th'authority in the authorised,  
Not the authorised person, respected;  
Th'authority in the person here reverenced.  
Th'authority for the person, not worshipped,  
Nor the person for himself, lacking honesty,  
Because he lacketh honest use of authority.

Spiders in authority without honesty,  
 No worship in themselves (I say) is t'avouch ;  
 Flies in honesty, without authority,  
 By that honesty, worship in themselves doth  
     couch,  
 And credence in both these parties is tried by  
     like touch.  
 Thus dishonest spiders, being authorised,  
 Be (for themselves) worshipped nor credited.

[T.ii.v.]  
 Be it (quoth the spider), but then to this put  
     case

One spider and one fly of one honesty are ;  
 The honest spider placed in authorised place,  
 The honest fly not. Doth not that spider's  
     state declare  
 More worship and credit than that fly can com-  
     pare ?  
 More worship ? yes : but more credence, no,  
     say I,  
 Proof whereof ensueth (quoth the fly), by and  
     by.

Honesty (I say as yourself erst here said)  
 Is the root that credence and worship both  
     twain  
 Grow on, so that our worship and credence,  
     weighed  
 On worshipful authority, do not remain  
 But on our honest use thereof ; thus our chain  
 That linketh us to credence is not authority,  
 But good use of authority, by honesty.

Wherein I conclude flies of most base degree,  
 Having like honesty to spiders most high,  
 Have in likewise like credence of equity.

Not like reverent worship (I say) for why?  
Spiders using authority honestly  
For place and person both where case so en-  
sues,  
Flies to spiders humble reverence must use.  
What is (quoth the spider) the difference in  
show  
Of one degree of credence in these two told?  
This (quoth the fly)—By this example to know :  
Two spiders' webs woven admit here to be  
sold,  
For stuff and all thing, both as one to behold,  
Save th'one above th'other, more fair gloss  
doth bear,  
More pleasant to the eye, both one to the wear.

[T.iii.r.]

Yet hath that glossy web estimation more  
Than th'other, though both webs of one weav-  
ing be ;  
And so for one credence in the two before ;  
Spiders' authority, used with honesty  
They shine in beauty of a double degree.  
So that though credence self be one in these  
both,  
Yet that gloss in that one, that other out goeth.  
Then (quoth the spider) it serveth for some-  
what,  
Honest spiders in authority to stand  
Above honest flies. Yea, but it serveth not  
(Quoth the fly), for your part of the point to  
hand,  
To prove more credence, in honest spiders  
scanned,  
Than in honest flies, for in equal honesty  
Standeth equal credit on both sides, ye see.

Which you (my masters) having seen, being  
wise, [hath less,  
And that which part hath credence more, which  
Of spiders or flies, is the thing to devise,  
We pray you your judgment therein to express.  
If we (quoth th'arbiters) in this case address  
Ourselves to give judgment, will ye that abide?  
Yea, yea (in Pilate's voice), all on both sides  
cried.

Let them all (to the butterfly said the ant)  
Depart, while we herein seek an end to find.  
Content (quoth the butterfly) at your instant :  
Trudge hence, ye flies (quoth he), as ye are as-  
signed.

At wink of the ant away the spiders wind.  
They all hereupon being gone forth forthwith,  
They two herein proceeded as followeth.

[T.iii.v.]

¶By th'ant's provocation the butterfly repeateth  
th'argument before made, in his gross terms,  
not far from full. And they twain seeming to  
agree upon the point herein, they command  
the spiders and flies back again. Cap. 39.



[T.iv.r.]

**W**ILL ye (quoth the ant) repeat us this  
talk last?

I would, but I will not (quoth the butterfly),  
For I cannot, though my heart for it should  
burst.

I forbad here all spouting in sophistry ;  
 Now they spout in spouting who may spout  
     most high,  
 Save now a word and then a word here and  
     there,  
 Vengeance the whit I am for their words the  
     near.

Tell (quoth the ant) as ye perceive even in  
     gross, [glance,  
 What the pith is. As I (quoth he) had a  
 Beginning of their communication arose,  
 Wherein they argued and fell at arguing  
     stance,  
 In comparison who should have most credence,  
 Of spiders or flies. The fly, flies' honest rate,  
 Took more credible, than spiders' worshipful  
     state.

The spider then cast a compass round about,  
 That honesty is virtuousness, and worship-  
     fulness  
 Due where honesty or virtuousness beareth  
     root ;  
 So that worshipfulness and honesty,  
 Do pend each on other, by that spider's guess.  
 Of spiders and flies, by his almashin guessed,  
 Honest are worshipful, worshipful are honest.

The fly to this said spiders by honesty,  
 Be worshipful and credible too, and then  
 The spider brought in a toy of 'thority,  
 Th'unhonest spider therein thereby to scan  
 In credence and worship each where and when,  
 More than the fly, he being an honest one,  
 Having to that honesty, 'thority none.

[T.iv.v.]

The fly to this for worship and credence said,  
 Though 'thority for itself worshipful be,  
 Yet winneth it no worship (in any wight laid)  
 To himself : for himself, outsepted that he  
 Use therein usation of said honesty ;  
 But in misuse of 'thority, the fly told,  
 Worship or credence no wight self can hold.

Then the spider 'leged, one spider and fly one  
 They both in one 'gree of honesty being,  
 That spider in 'thority, that fly in none,  
 Whether worship and credence were not 'grec-  
 ing

More to that spider, then to that fly fleeing.  
 More worship, he granted, because honesty,  
 And 'thority joined ; but more credence, no,  
 said he.

For honesty, and not authority, is root,  
 Said he, whereon all branches of credence  
 spring ;

Then no honesty, no credence had in boot,  
 Like honesty, like credence is everything.

The spider then asked what difference in show-  
 ing

Of one 'gree of credence in these foretold  
 twain,

Which, by a web sample, the fly answered  
 plain.

Two spiders' webs of one stuff and workman-  
 ship,

Save th'one above th'other hath gloss more gay  
 To the eye, but for wear they differ not a chip ;  
 Yet doth that glossy web bear the bell away.

And so the spider, to his honesty in stay,

Having 'thority above like honest fly,  
Credence shineth in the spider more beau-  
tifully.

[U.i.r.]

Well said (said the ant); though these terms be  
but base

Yet approve they well that you perceive the  
pith,

Which, concerning credence, concludeth in  
this case, [with,

That the worst fly, and the best spider there-  
Where one degree of honesty concurreth,

There one degree of credence, concurreth like-  
wise [arise.

Whereon hark here what a strange case doth

Put case a duke of estate honourable

Affirming a tale, on his honour, for true :

A duck steppeth forth, and faith, it is a fable.

Were it not a case (trow you) as strange as new

That duke and that duck of one credit to view?

The duke's and duck's honesty (quoth he) being  
one, [gone.

Their credence is one, by granted ground erst

From which ground (master ant) by my father-  
kin,

I will not start, but stand and stick even fast,  
As unto this my body sticketh this skin.

Well (quoth th'ant) being at this point, with  
this past,

Further to proceed in this case what way to  
cast, [here.

Let us have these spiders and flies again  
At beck of both, all before both did appear.

[The tailpiece as on page 38 here occurs in the  
original.]

[U.i.v.]

¶Th'ant telleth them that where th'evidence for both sides goeth to one effect, and that in debating which side is most credible to award the window unto, it is concluded that credence standeth upon honesty: and that as all spiders and flies are honest, so are they credible. Now must it first be tried, which side is most honest, thereon to judge which side is most credible.

Cap. 40.



[U.ii.r.]

**A**T your last standing here, (quoth th'ant)  
the case stood  
On trial in credence of spiders and flies,  
Th'evidence for both being one and like good,

On which part of both most credence might arise,

Wherein determinate trial to devise,

One couple of you, one spider and one fly,

Reasoned (byrlakin) prettily wittily.

Brief pith whereof (to present purpose) was this,—

Honesty, ye agreed, of credence is the ground;

Concluding for all as each wight's honesty is

More or less, so more or less credence is bound.

All spiders and flies, of one honesty found,

Are of one credence, in that credence doth bend

All wholly upon honesty to depend.

Then as th'evidence on which side to lay best  
Where credence lieth most, we thought best to  
have tried,

So must we now for credence see some way  
guessed

Which side bringeth most honesty testified,

And thereby most credit to this or that side.

Be it (quoth the butterfly); now let us see, sirs,  
Who shall here win boot, in winning here his  
spurs.

Another spider and fly to the helm stood,  
A comely couple as were of these two kinds;  
Their manner showed their bringing up to be  
good.

Curtsey low to th'arbiters, as curtsey binds;  
Behaviour most decent in uttering their minds;  
As their talk was of honesty to devise,  
So devised they their talk, honestly likewise.

[U.ii.v.]

¶One spider and one fly reasoning which side  
is most honest, agreeing in conclusion that  
the honesty on both sides appeareth to them  
two to be one, that fly requireth th'arbiters to  
ponder the case as they shall think good.

Cap. 41.



[U.iii.r.]

To speak (quoth this spider) truth honestly  
here,  
Briefly in honesty both parts to compare,  
Equality doth therein to me appear.  
As right many spiders right honest there are,  
So right many flies right honesty declare.  
As honesty (itself) is one quality,  
So, both parts qualified like, like honest be.

Sir (said this fly), this is of you qualified  
 Right honestly, whereupon (with your assent,  
 Under reformation) I would see here tried  
 One thing herein to try what different extent  
 Standeth in one degree of honesty here meant  
 In both us foresaid parties, spiders and flies,  
 Which in few words, I shall now to you devise.

Flies more than spiders twenty to one there are.  
 Put then in each one person like honesty,  
 In one spider and ten flies to compare.

Showeth not here that most number in quantity  
 To show here the most show of that quality?  
 It showeth most (quoth the spider) and to show  
 how,

Mark this short example that I shall show you.

One flower before two mirrors being set here  
 Th'one mirror cracked in ten pieces sundry,  
 Th'other whole. This flower in these glasses  
 shall appear,

At the whole glass, as it is one flower only;  
 The cracked glass showeth ten flowers ap-  
 parently,

For of those ten pieces of glass every one,  
 Each one piece (in itself), showeth one flower  
 alone.

So this fair flower honesty, in one spider placed,

[U.iii.v.]

And ten flies, each one possessed of like fame,  
 For honesty self, there is no more purchased  
 In the ten flies, than in th'one spider to name.  
 The only difference (I say) in show doth frame  
 Ten flowers in the cracked glass, as thus to  
 respect

Ten flowers in form, and one flower in effect.

That whole glass doth show one flower, and  
is no more;

That cracked glass, making show of flowers  
half a score,

There's yet but one flower at both these  
glasses, lo !

As in both these parts one honesty, no more.

Well (quoth the fly), yet as I have said before,  
One honesty in one spider and in ten flies,  
Most show of that honesty in those flies rise.

Which show showeth (the honesty in all being  
one)

A beauty shining of more excellency

In those ten flies, than in th'one spider alone.

Sir (said the spider), to speak indifferently,  
Even so take it I : and even so grant it I.

My masters (to th'arbiters), the fly then said,  
Weigh you how honesty is here to be weighed.



[U.iv.r.]

*¶ Th'arbiters commanding all to go apart again,  
they fall in talking somewhat at large, touching  
both credence and honesty in both these  
sides. Which done, to show therein their  
minds, they call all before them again.*

Cap. 42.



[U.iv.v.]

**T**H'ARBITERS, willing both parts to step  
back straight,  
Brother butterfly (said the ant), here ye see  
Honesty on both these parts to poise in weight;  
If more honest flies than honest spiders be,  
Yet of both parts each one like of honesty,  
The number more and less, as these two declare,  
Both numbers of one honesty they compare.

For the honesty self, (quoth he) to that they  
grew;  
But the honesty in those flies sheweth more  
excellent,  
As twenty flowers in the broken glass to view  
Show of th'one flower in the whole glass far out  
went.  
Yea, in show (quoth th'ant) with you I do con-  
sent.  
But by their equal degree of that quality,  
This spider and these flies equally honest be.

Well then, good master ant (quoth the butter-  
fly),  
We agree that the show of one honesty here  
Upon the ten flies' part sheweth more shin-  
ingly  
Than on the one spider's side in show can  
'pear.  
And for the honesty self, to draw to end near,  
You answering one demand demanded by me,  
Best part to principal purpose we shall soon  
see.

Is not this argnition of honesty,  
To see who are most honest, spiders or flies,  
To try thereby the side most credible to guess,  
In th'one evidence that both sides did devise  
Each side for itself? Yes (quoth th'ant), that  
none devise,  
But granteth it. Since (quoth the butterfly)  
that's trowth,  
Hark what proof to purpose upon this case  
groweth.

[X.i.r.—aa.]

Let us here demit one spider and ten flies,  
 All like honest, who, seeing two sue at law,  
 That one spider, for th'one side, a witness lies,  
 Those ten flies, to th'other side witnesses draw.  
 I never wist wight that ever heard or saw  
 But such ten flies' evidence more credibly  
 weighed,  
 Than such one spider's evidence weighed in  
 aid.

Not so (quoth th'ant); for put case this fore-said sort :

In witnessing one word in one tale erst told  
 To them all, th'one spider doth after report  
 That word was there and then said, and flies  
 hold

It was not said : in this case knoweth young  
 and old

This one spider must have in th'affirmative  
 More credit than ten flies in the negative.

Master ant, flies' want of credence standeth  
 not here,

In the weakness of credence in the flies,  
 But in weakness of credence in the case clear.

Negative against firmative weakly lies;

Forgetting and remembering thus this case  
 tries :

We may sooner forget that we heard last day,  
 Than remember that we heard not, any way.

But for both parts here put affirmative case.  
 This one spider affirmeth here, firmly,  
 That I lay (last night) in Northumberland  
 place;

These ten flies say in Westmoreland place lay I.  
In this affirmation deemation to try,  
Which part hath here most credence in your  
deeming?

The flies' (quoth the ant) apparently seeming.

[X.i.v.]

But since honesty and not credence is now  
The thing to touch here in place and case pre-  
sent,

And that (for the honesty self) I prove to you  
One degree of honesty in both sides bent,  
That one and those ten have one honest extent.  
Agree we for that part thus to resolve,  
Which resolution let me to them revolve.

Be it (quoth he); but when talk of credence  
cometh in,

I'll argue as I did now for credence again.

Do (quoth th'ant) if ye see thereby ought to  
win.

[twain;  
All oft erst called, they called again to them  
To whom the ant (as aptly did appertain)  
In words for the matter briefly couched and  
cast,

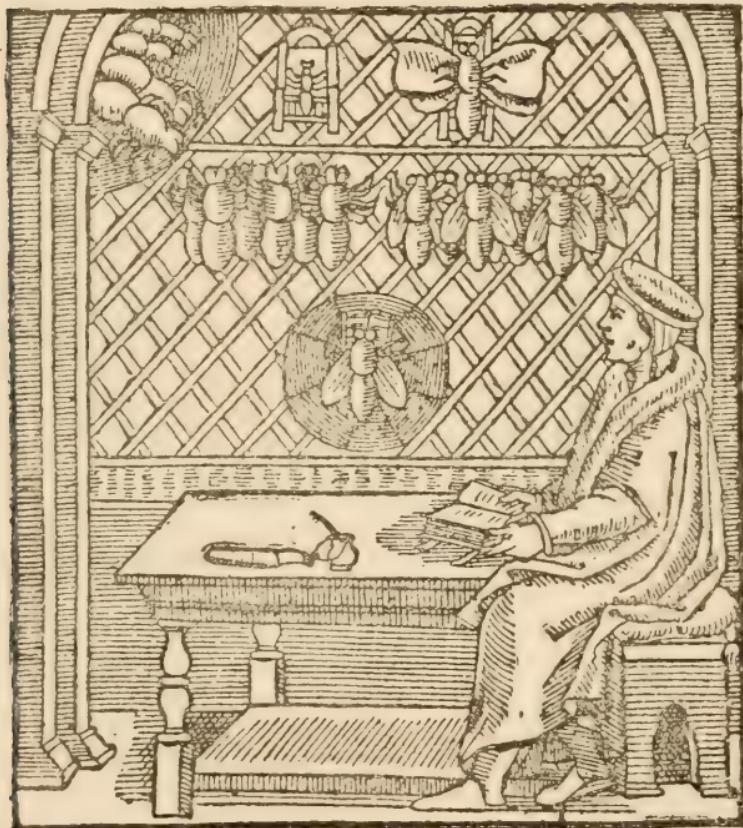
Pronounced to all what they two there passed  
last.

[*The tail-piece as on page 72 here occurs in the original.*] ]

[X.ii.7.]

¶Th'ant telleth them that they two determine honesty on both sides to be one, willing them to go forth in the matter. Wherewith one tart taunting spider, and one sharp saucy fly, forbearing till this time (with much pain) speaking or rather railing, stand now forth (upon tip-toes) to chop logic each with other in rude reasoning of this case.

Cap. 43.



[X.ii.v.]

O F spiders and flies, which part is most honest,  
The trial is the thing we now stand upon,  
Wherein for flies one his opinion expressed

That as flies in number are twenty to one  
Above spiders, all on both sides every one  
Being like honest, most honesty doth rise  
To the flies' part, where the most number lies.

To this one spider's tale of the two glasses  
touched,

Th'example showing more show of honesty  
In the more than in the less number avouched;  
Yet both parties being honest in one degree,  
Both parties of like honesty they took to be,  
And so to adjudge, we two having agreed,  
Agree you how herein further to proceed.

With this, before all these spiders and flies here  
flocked,

Up stood and outstart that couple of hare-  
brains,

The spider and fly, that erst there bragged  
and cocked.

Upon both their foreheads so swelled the veins  
That their thus long silence was seen their  
great pains.

In cocking currish countenance no whit to seek,  
Staring each on other, they stood cheek to  
cheek.

Authority they took, none was to them given;  
Of good manner void, in taunting smart smat-  
terers,

Plainness without honesty they used even.

They both to side against side were no flat-  
terers :

But like Isaiah in cheritress such chattering,  
That being now bent to chat, their tongues to  
stop,

[chop.]

With an axe as soon their heads off ye may

[X.iii.r.]

Their talk, whether to repeat or to repress  
 Rude railing therein, brought me somewhat to  
 doubt;

But finally, upon my show to profess  
 The show of this matter, thus far gone about,  
 I thought it meet to show the show through-  
 out;

Namely, the case framed no more far nor high  
 Than of a poor spider, and a more poor fly.

These all (I say) standing before these two set,  
 Both bending their brows in case rehearsed  
 erst,

This foremost spider and fly, in furious fret,  
 Frowning each on other, this process they  
 pierced;

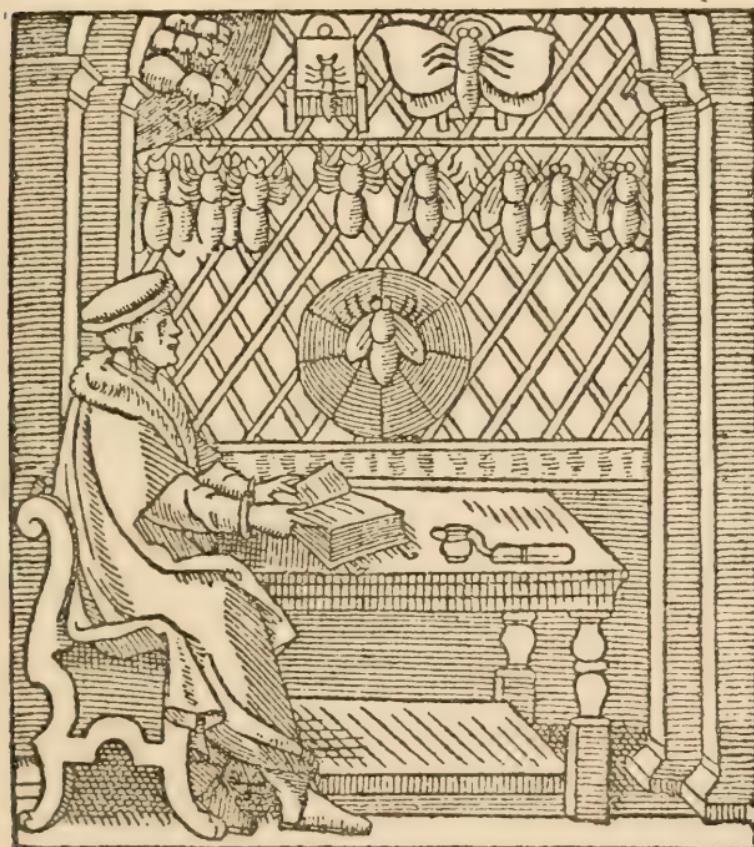
And vengeable venomly each other versed  
 Before they came to end; howbeit they began  
 In counterfeit coldness this matter to scan.



[X.iii.v.]

¶Where another spider and fly reasoned late  
before to prove which side of both is most  
honest, this said quarrelling spider and cocking  
fly labour to prove which part of both is most  
dishonest in words and deeds as usurpation in  
windows and other misbehaviour. At end  
whereof, in furious fumes thence runneth the  
spider one way, and the fly flingeth another.

Cap. 44.



[X.iv.r.]

MASTERS (quoth the spider), without cir-  
cumstance  
At reasoning on which part most honesty lies,  
Of spiders or of flies in continuance,

Your judgment both parts of like honesty tries.  
 Which honesty so tried, now contrariwise,  
 For a pithy purpose, let us here now see  
 On which side of both lieth most dishonesty.

Dishonesty? dare ye stir that? (quoth this fly)  
 What dishonesty know you by flies, sir,  
 More than flies know by spiders? Fly, what  
 know I?

Words and deeds such and so many will I stir,  
 As shall by dishonesty flies' honesty blur.  
 And first for words, honesty honestly to scan,  
 Honesty speaketh well. Yea (quoth the fly),  
 what then?

This, then (quoth the spider); take flies ten  
 thousand:

Wheresoever they flee, go, stand, lie, or sit,  
 Few of the number have taken upon hand  
 To give any good spider any good word yet,  
 Except in flattery, which words show every  
 whit

As much dishonesty in false fair semblance,  
 As showeth, in fury, foul words of more griev-  
 ance.

When flies, flocked together upon their ale  
 bench

Begin to hizz and bizz, in their kind of talk,  
 No lords, no laws, can their buzzing babble  
 quench.

And so many words, so many lies still walk.  
 If one devil with another for lies should calk,  
 They could never find the like. Oh (quoth the  
 fly)

Your mastership talketh wonderful honestly!

If ye gave ear to yourself, ye might soon know,  
Spider or fly, who speaketh most ill of us  
twain.

Speak not spiders as ill of flies, as ye trow,  
As flies speak of spiders? Yes, it sheweth too  
plain [pain.]

Wherein these terms must we use upon great  
When either of other part talk out of measure,  
The knave fly raileth, master spider speaketh  
his pleasure.

But grant dishonest words each part of other  
Do speak alike much, which sheweth like dis-  
honesty

In both these parts, the t'one part to the  
t'other.

Of flies' dishonest words, the cause is to see  
The dishonest deeds of you spiders to be.

Example whereof, to prove this case most  
clear, [pear.]

Doth in this window (for all windows) ap-

All holes wherein being ours in common right,  
Late commonly ours, now severally yours,  
Look where ye set in foot, by right or by  
might,

Like as the devil saith, so say you,—All is ours.  
For as this window sheweth your usurped  
powers,

So in all windows, wheresoever ye come,  
Ye grasp up all, and flies may say nought, but  
mum.

Thus when we speak (I say) if our speech ill be,  
Of your ill deeds come our ill words every one.  
Do you none ill deeds to us, good sir? (quoth  
he)

Yes, sir (quoth the fly), flies to spiders do one;  
 In our curtsey made to you down to ground  
 gone,

Most sinfully we commit idolatry,  
 For we therein worship false imagery.

[Y.i.r.—bb.]

False imagery? (quoth he) ye are a false knave.  
 A right livery (quoth he) turned on the wrong  
 side.

But livery and wages that spiders vouchsafe  
 To give flies, of one substance are verified.

Knave up or take up, fly, thy wandering words  
 wide, [touch,

Truly to try how truth the touchstone may  
 On whose side most dishonesty is t'avouch.

All dishonest words in flies of spiders had,  
 Come of dishonest deeds in spiders to flies.  
 Thus sayest thou, which saying showeth thee  
 drunk or mad.

What ill or wrong deeds do we to you devise  
 Our own windows to use, as our own will  
 applies? [own,

Your deeds were not ill were all windows your  
 But no words save your own show windows so  
 known.

The tops and top-sides of all windows all yours,  
 We have granted and would grant, were ye  
 content

To grant likewise all holes in all windows ours;  
 But spiders must have all, ye may nought  
 relent,

And in your having all, mark th'experiment,  
 How the world before went, and since how it  
 goeth,

For commonwealth in spiders and in flies both.

When you in tops and sides there kept your estate,  
 And we in the holes, as stood with our degree,  
 Spiders and flies in all windows situate,  
 Dwelt each by other in wealth and unity.  
 But since (like a sort of rake-hells as ye be)  
 Ye lift each at other, and all at us lift,  
 There is in you, nor us, either love or thrift.

[Y.i.v.]

But you, we, and our windows too, all go to wrack  
 By your covetous cutthroats, the devil choke ye ! [back ?]  
 Wilt thou, wretch (quoth he), lay all this on our Grown by our strifes, nay, fly and flies, I'll yoke ye [ye].  
 With more than half part of the ill to smoke It is and hath been said there's no good accord In place whereas every knave will be a lord.

Which is terbox to your side : for out of doubt Your cockapert pride and your covetous hearts Have brought more than three parts of our ills about.

Your rude rebellious disobedient parts Much unto our (and much more to your own) smarts,  
 Kicking and wincing at every good order, Hath destroyed good order in every border.

Good order, lost by pride and covetousness, In grant, but how lost by us? nay, lost by you. Flies may be covetous, but as for riches,

Flies get none except here and there one  
t'allow.

Yes (quoth the spider), many flies are rich now,  
In occupying in windows under us,  
By price of things raised there in foul overplus.

Where flies of spiders (by wrong, quoth he) are  
driven

To hire our own, kept from us (we say) by  
might, [given,  
Fines, incomes and rents, so great and many  
With such straight restraint of our accustomed  
right, [quite.

That one of those, or all, eat up our gains  
Which exact exactions in spiders began  
Ere flies in sale of any wares from th'old rate  
ran.

[Y.ii.r.]

As I am true gentleman, thou list on us.

As ye are a true gentleman, even so I lie.

But as ye are a false gentleman to discuss  
Your falsehood and my truth may join jollily.

I'll prove straight (quoth the spider) that thou  
liest, I;

For rents and wares raised, thou sayest spiders  
begun,

But mark how un honestly that lie doth run.

Five foot to two in windows of this room  
Ye flies hold yet in lease at unraised rent;  
All holders whereof sell their wares as extreme  
As though their farms at the most raised rent  
went.

Now who beginneth here the first extort ex-  
tent?

The flies (quoth the fly), but yet spiders begun  
To raise rents before as leases did outrun.

And as leases fall still, so raise they rent still,  
And still (of their goodness) will raise, I doubt  
not.

In new leases of such covenants to fulfil  
As the flies' gains no great privy tithes shall lot,  
The lewd lords, their landlords, in reckoning  
the shot,  
The lot of allowance in both parts to lay,  
The spiders have the cream, the flies have the  
whey.

But spiders letting farms, and flies holding  
farms,  
Th'one letting farms high, th'other selling  
victuals dear;  
And of all ware sellers each shifteth from harms  
By raising his ware, as other wares appear.  
But all that on their pensions (or pence) live  
mere  
In windows, without land to let or ware to sell,  
Wherever they dwell may think they dwell in  
hell.

[Y.ii.v.]

Well (quoth the spider), for leases not run out,  
Fly farmers holding farms yet, as old rent  
gave, [ing rout?  
Why raise they their wares with th'other poll-  
They take time (quoth the fly) while they the  
time have;  
For when your time cometh, you will so poll  
and shave  
By raised rents, turning head farmers to herds,  
That they know ye will flit the fat from their  
beards.

And ye high head spiders in a conspiracy  
 Conspire in all windows, to keep farms at  
     heith, [things high.  
 Or keep them in your own hands, to keep  
 Where a fly (quoth the spider) double rent  
     payeth, [sayeth :  
 More than he hath paid, there experience  
 Look what wares at what price that flies sold  
     before,  
 Those or worse wares he selleth for treble price  
     more.

So that if spiders raise rents, two pounds from  
     one, [wares straight ;  
 Three pounds from one at least flies raise their  
 Their which robbery, hearing any rumour upon,  
 Of the fault on us spiders they lay the weight,  
 Roaring in raging how we our lands do height,  
 Making them beggars, when they with that  
     they win  
 Are able to purchase the farms they dwell in.

Well lied, well said ! (said the fly) I would have  
     said.  
 But now to our ground, on which our saying  
     arose,  
 For dishonesty on both parts to be laid,  
 Covetous and pride being chief grounds in  
     gross,  
 To prove on which part most dishonesty goes ;  
 Dishonesty by covetousness doth rise,  
 At the least as much in spiders as in flies.

[Y.iii.r.]  
 And as much in flies as in spiders, say I.  
 But what remedy, fly, to remove this grief ?  
 Look they that list, they shall for me (quoth the  
     fly).

We talk not now of grief to devise relief  
By honesty, but by dishonest mischief  
To charge which part most dishonest we can  
guess  
In all ills, namely, pride and covetousness.

Wherein as we in covetousness have said,  
Let us now each part appose other in pride,  
The which vice, for both our sides uprightly  
weighed,

Dishonesty therein shall be verified  
To lie altogether on the spiders' side.  
Spiders are of flies alway curtsey takers,  
And flies to spiders alway curtsey makers.

And yet (I say) in bending our knees to fall,  
Flies looking like lambs, spiders like lions  
look, [all,  
As though poor flies were made for rich spiders  
Of which, though foolish flies the suffrance  
may brook, [book

Wise flies cannot brook it, for they find in  
This demand written, When Adam dolve and  
Eve span,

Who was, in those golden days, a gentleman?

None, as who say. And were there none now  
(say we)

The world should be as good now as it was  
then.

If yeomen flies were put in authority,  
We would rule as well as spiders gentlemen.  
Shall Jack sauce rule now, fly? Sir, by these  
bones ten,

We shall sure be ruled in all kinds of laws  
As well by Jack sauce, as by master John  
daws.

[Y.iii.v.]

What wit or what wealth winneth your estate stout,  
   [do nought.  
 Look highly, speak lordly, command all, and  
 Gay gear, goodly cobwebs, to revel with the rout,  
 Without any households for the poor flies wrought.  
 But with dishes dainty far fetched and dear bought.  
 One fat spider another feedeth in fine feast,  
 More to set out himself, than to feast his guest.

These proud peacock's properties wholly remain  
 In you proud spiders, and not in us poor flies ;  
 But most proud, most fool, as flies' proverbs contain.  
 Flies (quoth the spider) in their proud exercise,  
 Are too far unlike lords, lords' looks t'enterprise;  
 Lordlike to look, flies' countenance cannot brook ;  
 But though flies look not lordlike, knavelike they look.

Shall we not find a knave fly, not worth two straws,  
 Look more proudly than the best lord in a shire ?  
 Yes, and take upon him, in chop logic laws,  
 To control us and our households far and near.  
 So that by pride, less dishonesty sheweth here  
 In lordly looks of spiders' lordlike bravery,  
 Than in flies' knavish deeds, by knavelike knavery.

Of which sort of false malapert minions,  
 Thou art captain, caitiff, against us to kick.  
 And sure thou holdest perilous opinions ;  
 Were thou opposed pithily to the quick,  
 I durst lay my life thou art an heretic.  
 I defy (quoth the fly) the wretch that so saith.  
 Hark ! I will even in your ear confess my faith.

[Y.iv.7.]

The fly, blowing awhile in the spider's ear,  
 The spider that while breathing in the fly's  
 neck, [spear ;  
 Both cried out, as they had been stung on a  
 I am killed ! (quoth the spider), death cometh at  
 beck !  
 This fly hath blown fly-blows in mine ear a  
 peck. [the road !

I am poisoned (quoth the fly), death rideth in  
 This spider's breath maketh me swell like a  
 toad !

Triacle, cried th'one ! An ear pick, cried  
 th'other !

The fly flew, the spider crept, quite out of sight.  
 The fly flung one way, the spider ran another ;  
 Fume of fiery fury in both was seen right.  
 But both being anon gone out of sight quite,  
 Th'ant, in reproach of their communication,  
 Told them all part of his imagination.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 28 is here given in  
 original.*]

[Y.iv.v.]

¶After a few words, which th'ant speaketh to  
the rest of both sorts there, they are assigned  
to stand back again, while th'arbiters gather  
out of this railing such reason as they can.

Cap. 45.



[Z.i.r.—cc.]

**I**T is commonly said, and commonly seen,  
Whereas any number of any sort be,  
Of all sorts there be, and evermore have been;  
And as in most base sort some right good we  
see,  
So in the best sort as ill to decree.  
Example whereof no better proof ensureth,  
In no one example, than this one procureth.

Of you, both sorts spiders and flies, present  
here,

You use yourselves honestly, many and most;  
But yet thereto see we that here doth appear  
On each one side one so brimly brag and boast,  
That they prove on both sides some knaves in  
the cost:

I mean these twain gone, whom upon inquir-  
ing,

Are, in honest audience, not worth the hearing.

Forsooth (said a sober spider), even indeed

They are unworthy hearing in any place.

True (quoth a wise fly), but since it was agreed  
By common counsels on both sides to purchase  
Or provide them to join with us in this case,  
It seemeth unseemly for us to reject  
Such as our electors to us have elect.

It seemeth so (said the ant) and I take it so.

Brother butterfly, will ye that they depart,  
While we twain to groping of this matter go?  
Yea, master ant (quoth he), with all my heart.  
They all (once again) from them twain revart,  
While they two devise some way of availing  
To gather right reason out of rude railing.

[Z.i.v.]

**T**h'arbiters consider in this taunting talk, that sundry dishonest abuses there are in sundry parties on both sides. Upon their agreement of conclusion wherein, they have before them those other spiders and flies again. Cap. 46.



[Z.ii.r.]

**T**O pass this last case (quoth th'ant) as in award,  
Which part is most dishonest, the case erst weighed,  
Reasoning which is most honest part to regard,

Is a plain plat to prove this likewise laid.  
As honesty there is equally displayed,  
To show the t'one part as honest as the t'other,  
So show both here like dishonest, th'one and  
th'other.

What kinds of faults we may in the spiders  
find,

The same (or the like) we may find in the flies ;  
So that (I say) as equity hath assigned,  
One degree of dishonesty in both lies. [tries  
Where our former talk (quoth the butterfly)  
The honesty one in both the sides, yet ye know  
That honesty in the flies shineth most in show.

For that (which I told you I would in mind  
bear)

Flies far more in number than spiders appear.  
True (quoth th'ant), and as most number win-  
neth flies there

Most show of honesty, so most number here  
Most show of dishonesty showeth in flies clear.  
As most number of the honest shine most in  
fame,

Most number of dishonest shine most in shame.

Then (quoth the butterfly) as flies here nought  
get,

So lose they nought, wherein let us be content  
To set the hare's head against the goose's  
giblet.

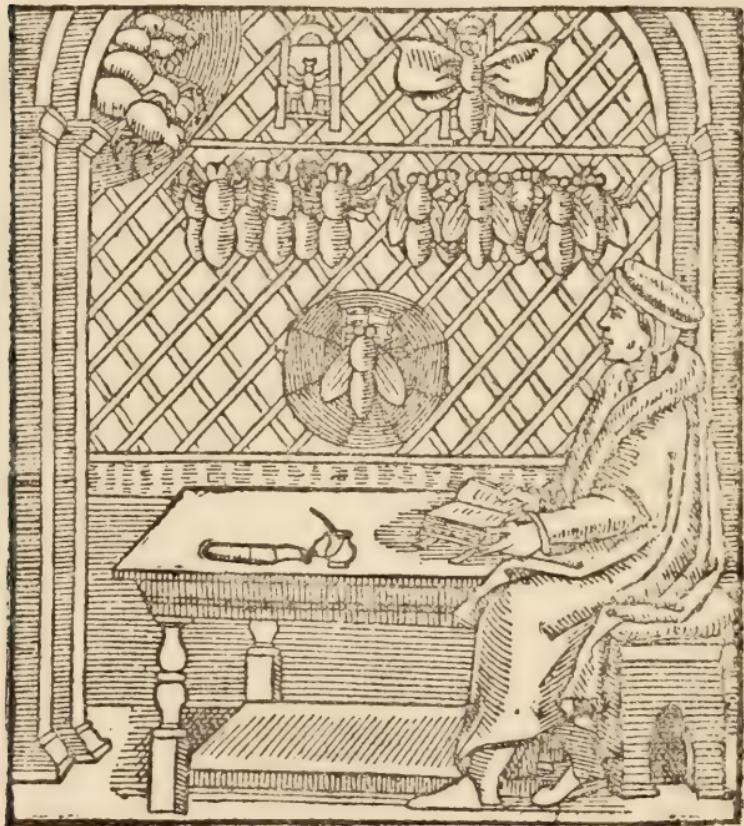
Both sides to adjudge like honest I assent.  
And I (quoth the ant) do give the same judg-  
ment.

Hereupon they called all again to stand near,  
To whom wherein th'ant declared as ensueth  
here.

[Z.ii.v.]

¶Th'ant declareth in those spiders and flies,  
that the tales of the pert spider and fly before  
told do charge each other's part in such sort  
that they cannot say which side is most dis-  
honest; but they two adjudge clearly in dis-  
honest things both sides of like dishonesty.  
Wherewith they all avoided back again, th'ar-  
biters talk to fall to a point between themselves  
what report finally and fully to make.

Cap. 47.



[Z.iii.7.]

**A**LTHOUGH the railing of those railers  
late gone [thought,  
For itself or themselves, unmeet may be  
Either to be talked upon or thought upon,

Yet since the matter of their talk such talk  
brought [wrought,  
That as one ground of our talk, talk hath it  
We have wrought thereto considerate consent,  
To conclude therein this extended extent.

Dishonesty in spiders and in flies both  
Appeareth approved so indifferently,  
That on which side the most dishonesty goeth  
We cannot know nor otherwise verify,  
But like dishonesty on both sides doth lie.  
So that out of hand to declare our decree,  
Both part in dishonesty have one degree.

But forasmuch as dishonesty here touched  
Was to prove or disprove honesty before,  
Which part of both most or least honesty  
avouched,  
And that dishonesty doth decide no more  
Than honesty did, leave dishonesty's lore;  
And by former talk in honesty alone,  
Take honesty on both parts here, judged one.

The grave number on both sides agreed to this.  
Whereupon th'ant asked who had further to  
say  
Concerning evidence in the premisses.  
They all said they had to say no further, they.  
Well, said they both, ye all yet again away.  
Which done, they both each to other their  
minds brake,  
What end (now at end) they finally might take.

[Z.iii.v.]

**T**h'arbiters being agreed on their report, they call to them again the spiders and the flies.

Cap. 48.



[Z.iv.r.]

**B**ROTHER butterfly (quoth th'ant), how think ye now?

What maketh all this evidence for either side?  
All alike for both (quoth he), now how say you?  
I say the same (quoth th'ant) wherein is specified

Too hard a trial to judge the best side tried,  
The best side of both, since doubt hath thus drowned it,

Let's at last leave it as we at first found it.

Agreed (quoth the butterfly), by my good sooth.  
They herewith called again the spiders and  
flies,

Each hoping to hear a tale for his own tooth.  
But th'ant being (for an ant) learned and wise,  
Otherwise weighing, otherwise did devise  
Of this process passed, whereto report the pith;  
For which (unto them all) he made way forth-  
with.



[Z.iv.v.]

¶Th'ant showeth them that the butterfly and he  
are at point what to report, devising it to be re-  
ported before the head spider and the fly in the  
cobweb, the two principal parties, and to have  
with them to hear and witness their report, two  
spiders and two flies, witty and discreet, and  
the rest to stay there till their return. Which  
being agreed, they set forth straight to the  
said cobweb.

Cap. 49.



[Aa.i.r.—dd.]

**K**NOW ye all that we two being full agreed  
What we shall say, we must now full agree  
Where we shall say; which saying must be de-  
creed

Before those two that did us two decree  
As friends of trust in this authority.  
The spider and fly (mean I) which two are  
Chief grounds in the case that we must now  
declare.

The butterfly and all the rest there said  
For that report that was the place most fit.  
Let us, with us (quoth th'ant), have forth in aid  
Two spiders and two flies of credence and wit,  
And all the rest till our return here to sit.  
They two with the two two's following in order,  
Passed on till they came to the cobweb's  
border.

The fly in cobweb stood up, and prayer left,  
Longing for meed of prayer prayed ere then  
With deadly look, as death had life bereft.  
But when the spider into place came then,  
Alas ! poor fly, how he looked pale and wan.  
All those without, unto the spider within,  
At their low curtsey done, th'ant did thus begin.



[Aa.i.v.]

The ant associate with the said sort pronounceth at length (to the spider and fly in the cobweb) this brief effect, that inasmuch as on both sides the evidence is one, and that the credence is one, by the honesty being one, they



two can (in reason) no way try how to lay th'accustomed right more on th'one side than on th'other. They finally leave the case even at liberty, as they found it, and so depart to the place of arbitrament again.

Cap. 50.

[Aa.ii.r.]

MY great good uncle, and little good friend  
fly,  
Where you two chose us two your arbiters late,  
To adjudge (by reason) the custom rightly  
Of spiders and flies, in all windows situate,  
Which part should have all, or what part we  
should rate

To either part, what hath thereon risen sith,  
And what in fine for fine doth rise, hear the pith.

In the first talk between you twain and us  
twain,

Th'issue to try was (as ye said unto us),  
How right in all windows (I say) doth remain  
To both sides, as reason may custom discuss,  
You, for you and all spiders, alleging thus—  
All parts in all windows (none except) said ye,  
Are yours and all spiders', as in tenure free.

Wherein you fly (as ye then affirmed) held,  
All holes in all windows are flies' free of old,  
Tops and sides being spiders' hold free, to build  
Head houses or tenantries or what ye would.  
So that for the holes only is all the hold;  
Which (upon further evidence to consider)  
We (as ye willed us to go) went together

Where spiders and flies, a certain number met,  
Before appointed, evidence to disclose;  
And first for all spiders, one to us there set,  
Said;—As report of spiders hath gone and  
goes,

All holes in all windows are theirs to dispose.  
The flies then called, one fly for all verified,  
All holes, by all flies' words, belong to flies'  
side.

[4a.ii.v.]

These two in their two tales showing difference  
none,

In matter nor in words, save only that they  
Laid the same each on the side he standeth  
upon,

They both and they all strangers to us to say  
This one sentence in which of both sides to lay,  
Both showing alike credible, to us too;  
That was thing difficult for us two to do.

Whereupon both parties (before us both) called  
we,

To try on which part most credence might ap-  
pear,

Wherein one spider and one fly of gravity,  
Reasoning on which side most credence should  
show here,

They both at last granted this, for a ground  
clear,—

As every wight's count in honesty doth mount,  
So every wight's credence amounteth in ac-  
count.

For honesty agreed they to be the ground  
(Or grounded cause) of credence. Then were  
we driven

To search on which side most honesty was  
found,

Wherein (on both sides) when all reasons were  
given, [even.

The honesty on both sides in our judgment was  
And so for credence (it on honesty growing),  
One honesty, one credence in both parties show-  
ing.

Thus their evidence being one, whereunto  
 Their credence one, by being of honesty one,  
 To try the wrongdoers, which we came to do,  
 What way can we (in reason) take? forsooth  
 none.

Wherein lacking power, since our goodwill  
 alone [charge,  
 Can do nought honestly this charge to dis-  
 As we this case found here, we leave here, at  
 large.

[Aa.iii.r.]

Friend butterfly (said the spider), how say you?  
 As master ant hath said (said he) so say I.  
 Then (quoth the spider) with thanks to you  
 both now,  
 We both discharge you. Sir (quoth the butter-  
 fly),  
 My poor kinsfly here that in durance doth lie,  
 For charge or discharge in every condition,  
 I beseech your mastership handle him with  
 'scretion.

I will (quoth the spider) use him no worse  
 Than standeth with reason, law, custom, and  
 conscience.

If (quoth the fly) those granted grounds not  
 reverse,  
 As, till I see them reversed, in experience  
 I see no cause to conceive lack of credence,  
 Then shall I (and all flies) laud your equity,  
 Undoubtful trust whereof much comforteth me.

Fear not that, fly (quoth he). And the fly (of  
 truth)  
 From dangerous dread that he drooped in ear,  
 Hopeth now in hope, as all outward show  
 sheweth;

But yet for all th'outward brag that he did bear,  
Methought he seemed inwardly not without  
fear,

Lest fair faithful promise of present pleasance  
Might have foul faithless displeasant perform-  
ance.

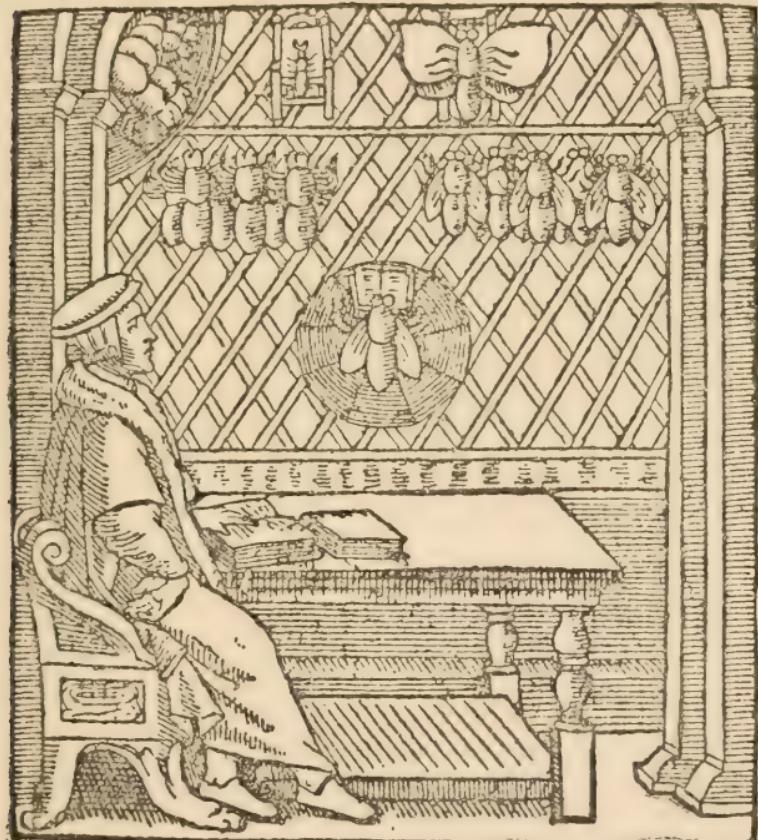
But between hope and dread he lying there still,  
Th'ant and butterfly, the four spiders and flies,  
Took leave and departed the same place until  
That they last came from, where their company  
lies;

To repeat their doing in this compromise,  
The spider in cobweb gone that to declare,  
In th'upper part of his house, where his flock  
are.

[Aa.iii.v.]

¶Th'ant and butterfly, sat where they had sat,  
th'ant repeateth to those spiders and flies the  
report made by him at the said cobweb. At end  
whereof the spiders and flies, seeing that time  
spent all in vain, each side among themselves  
fall in murmuring.

Cap. 51.



[Aa.iv.r.]

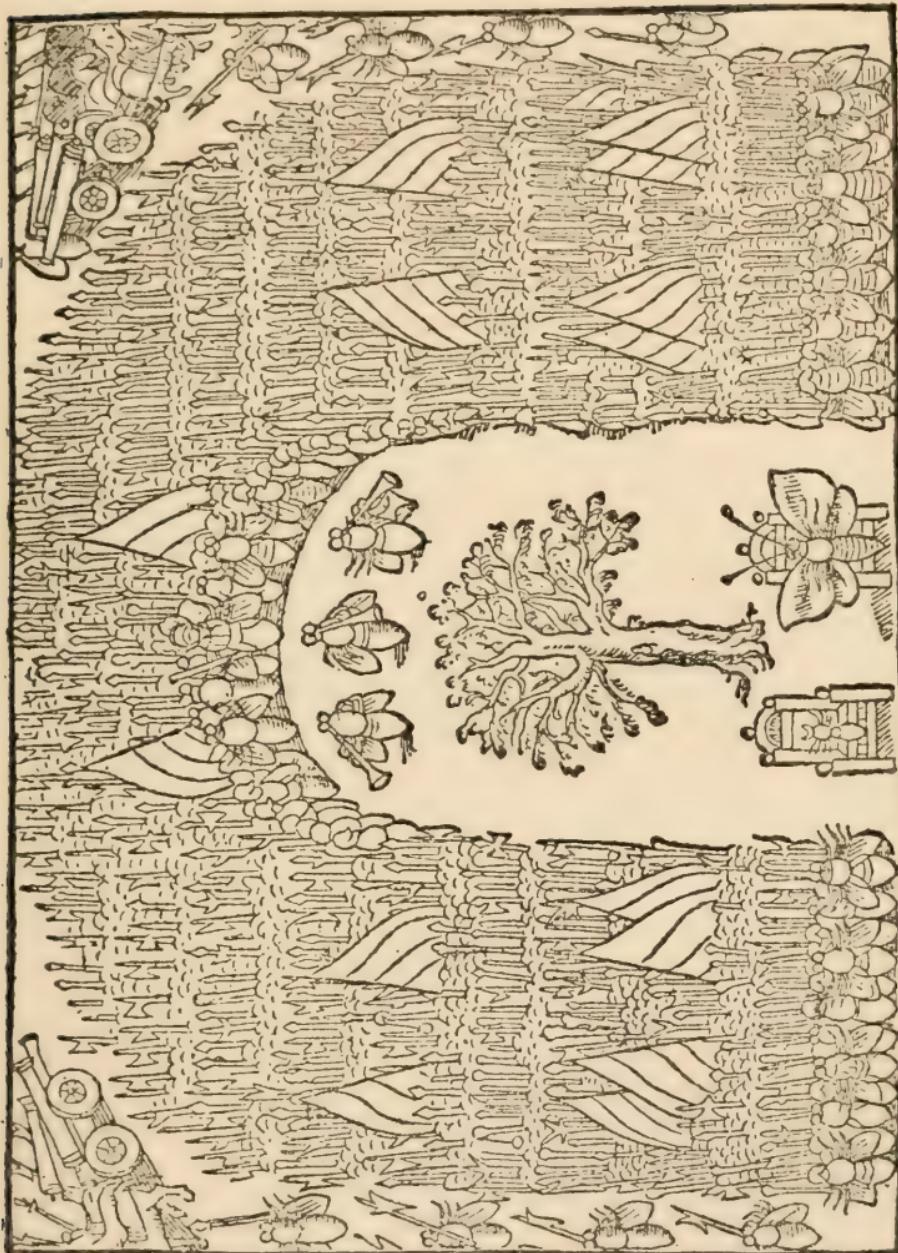
TH'ANT and butterfly, set where they erst  
had sat,  
Those spiders and flies standing where they erst  
stood,  
Th'ant repeating this, they perceiving in it

Much time spent on all parts and no part take  
good,  
They began generally to change their mood.  
The spiders together clustering and cluttering,  
The flies together in murmuring muttering.



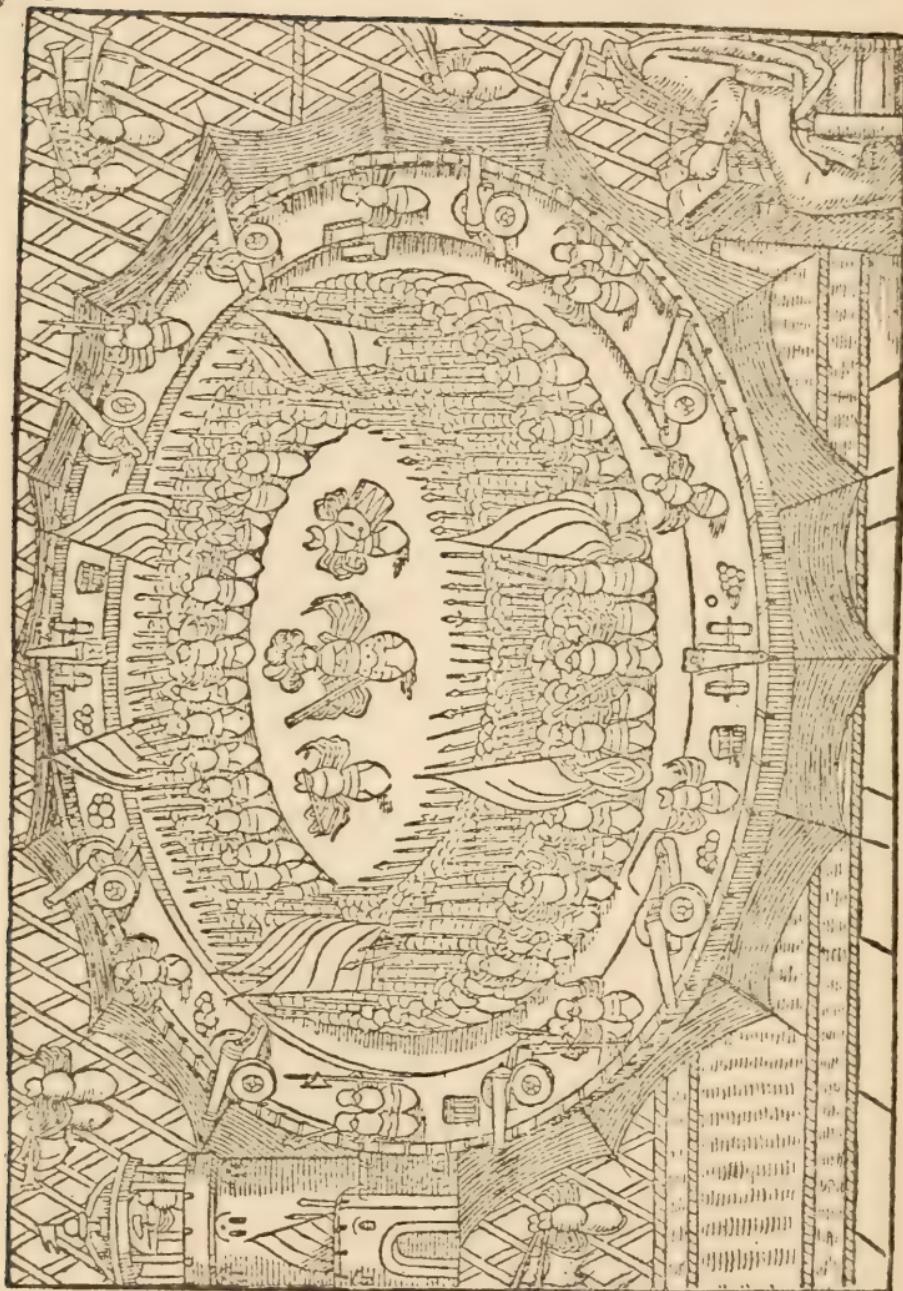
¶Upon the spiders and the flies muttering, mur-  
muring, suddenly there come nigh about them  
a wonderful number of all manner of flies in  
their warlike manner. Whereat with twink of  
an eye (as it were) the head spider (with a great  
number of spiders) hath builded a strong  
castle in that cobweb, with ordnance and  
weapons and spiders ready in order of defence.

Cap. 52.



[At this point the regularity of the signatures in the 1556 edition is interrupted. Before Bb.i.r. three gatherings of four leaves occur (=12 leaves=24 pages). Obviously this was to provide for the full-page illustra-

[—ee.



tions introduced for the first time in this edition. The supplementary signatures are given as they occur in the original: see Note-Book.]

**H**EREWITH (even suddenly, at twink of  
an eye)

Came such a flight of flies in scattered array,  
As shadowed the sun from th'earth to the sky.  
No kind of fly alive but was there that day.  
Tag and rag, like lions raging now rage they;  
Flesh flies, butterflies, land flies, water flies,  
Bees, humblebees, wasps, hornets, gnats of all  
size.

The grand Captain, standing amid among this  
rout,

[told;

Was the fly that flang from thence in fury erst  
Seldom hath been seen such a sort, and all so  
stout,

Except here and there one, temperate to behold;  
Staves, bats, clubs, pitchforks, most beggarly,  
most bold.

Wherewith the spiders that erst gave evidence,  
In the cobweb took sanctuary for defence.

Where, whether this proud spider gave word  
before,

Who with that pert fly had before there prated,  
Or that spiders of ordinary have store  
Of all munition for wars ready rated,  
I wot not; but without more time delated,  
Ordnance of all sorts round the cobweb was  
laid,

And all spiders with all weapons pressed in aid.

Daggs, handguns, hakes, arquebusses, cul-  
verins, flings,

Potguns, sakers, cannons, double and demy,  
Field pieces, of all suits, with all belonging  
things,

Bills, bows, partisans, pikes, to push far or  
nigh;

And to occupy all, spiders placed aptly,  
Each of them harnessed meet for his property,  
The rest all in bright harness *cap-à-pie*.

The flies of all ordnance were not destitute,  
Nor furnished like as the spiders were;  
Rusty rotten pieces, their terror to bruit,  
They shot off, and shot wide of marks every  
where.

Drums, fifes, flags, and whifflers, none wanted  
there;

Banners displayed on both sides all arms bear-  
ing, [ing.]

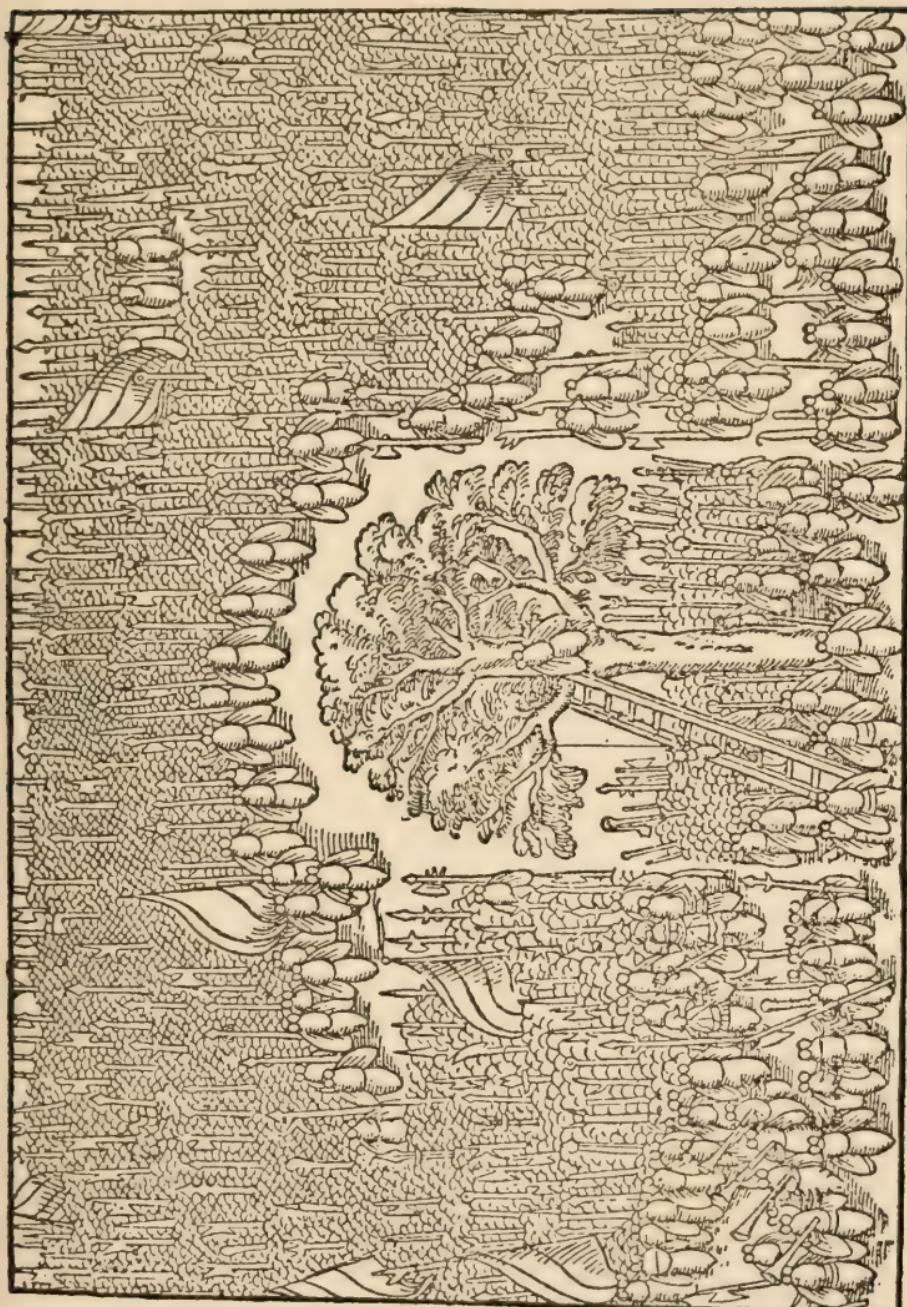
In heralds' books avowed for both sides wear-

The flies, in number above the spiders far,  
The spiders, in order far better than they,  
The flies will adventure to make or to mar;  
The spiders (not suddenly) soberly weigh  
To defend or offend the flies as they may.  
The spiders in cobweb will bide this jeopardy;  
The flies in field will besiege them at liberty.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in  
original.*]

¶This huge heap of flies light about th'arbiters,  
apprehending th'ant, casting a halter about his  
neck, drawing him to their tree of reformation  
(as they call it) to hang him straight. But at  
his suit to be heard speak ere he die, one fly  
fleeth into the tree, wherewith the captain com-  
mandeth silence.

Cap. 53.



[*The plate as on p. 220 is here repeated in original.*]

**T**HIS innumerable flock of flies are now  
 Marched unto th'arbiters, and, they there  
 lighted, [vow  
 They took th'ant prisoner with an unadvised  
 To spite the spiders, who had flies long spited,  
 That he should straight be hanged, and then in-  
 dicted  
 Of felony against flies as an adherent  
 To spiders, in their usurpation urgent.

Hang him up (quoth one) with wild words and  
 wide wit, [where,  
 A false wretch he is, and well known every-  
 And would be known nowhere, wherever he flit.  
 He hath two names; one name here, another  
 there;  
 In this place called ant, in that place called pis-  
 mire;  
 And one suspected varlet two names to have  
 Is (in common judgment) judged a false knave.

Then stepped forth a sort of fell flies, furiously,  
 Who, having cast a halter about th'ant's neck,  
 To their tree of reformation standing by  
 They felly forced him, with many a churlish  
 check.

A ladder to that tree was set at a beck, [tied :  
 Where he in haste hauled up, and the halter  
 Turn the thief off the ladder, thousands cried.

Small was the marvel though th'ant were much  
 abashed  
 To see this sore sudden importable chance;  
 Who liveth in nature but he must be dashed  
 Both out of courage and out of countenance,  
 That should straight be dashed out of continu-  
 ance,

When none (or few), being forewarned of  
death's hour, [shower.  
Can evenly bear feeling thought of that sharp  
[Aa.v.r.

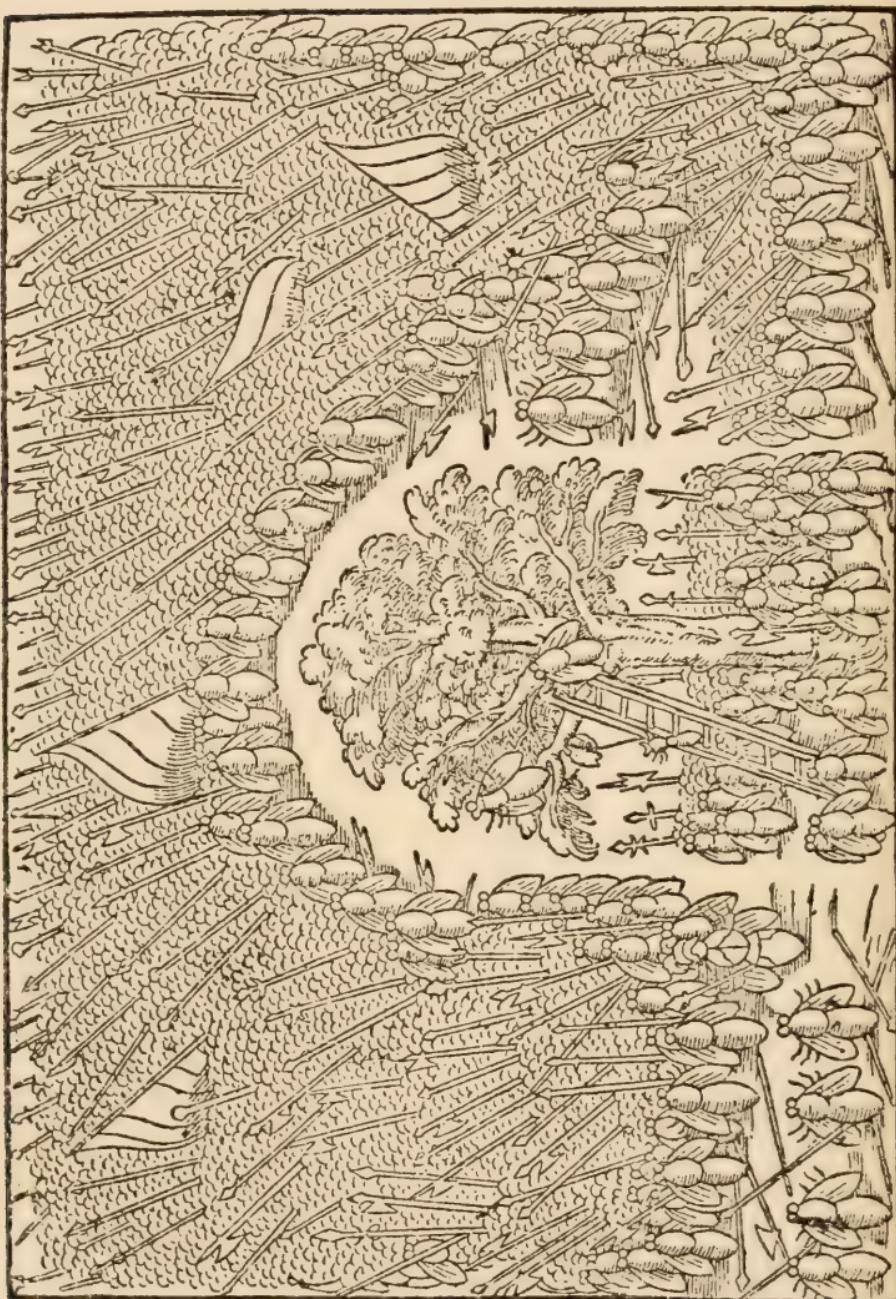
Right now in worship set high, as a judge,  
Even now, standing in shame to be hangéd  
It was to him a feeling grief of grudge, [high,  
Unknown to all that have not feelingly  
Felt of the same in their experieney ;  
His look and hue now and late so unlike,  
That to the heart a Jew that sight must strike.

In which agony, calling to him his wit,  
One wise fly, at all former talk present,  
Seeming with all flies present in good credit,  
He prayed to persuade all there to be content  
To hear him speak, ere he his life should relent.  
But reason (quoth that fly) ; and therewithal he,  
To get th'ant that grace, gat him in to that  
tree.

The fly there bent to speak, the captain grand,  
By mouth of an herald at trumpet sound,  
In proclamation did silence straight command.  
Whereat, a few words here and there in ears  
round, [drowned ;  
To hear that fly speak their speech was all  
Whereupon the captain, bidding that fly say,  
These or these like few words, he said straight-  
way.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 234 is here given in  
original.*]

*The fly in the tree, to persuade the flies to hear  
the ant speak, wadeth honestly, politicly to  
allure them to quiet hearing of the ant before  
they put him to death. His which tale told, he  
removeth to his place again.* Cap. 54.



[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.]

**B**ROTHERS and brotherly friends all, I  
doubt not

Ye know me a fly, and take me such a fly  
As for ant, or spider, in anywhat  
Will not be false to the flock that naturally  
I ought to be true unto to live or die;  
For this ant and all ants what I shall say now  
Shall approve me none of them, but one of you.

Of whom each one another myself to say,  
And each one to other (I hope) likewise knit,  
Let us all as one, entering this one journey,  
Enter the path as we may pass through it;  
One deep induction whereto, judged in my wit,  
Is to flee rash deeds rashly done here, for such,  
Have undone all, in our like case, very much.

One of which dangerous deeds (under correc-  
tion),

We do in this deed, th'ant thus to death to  
draw

Without accusation or detection

Whereby might appear any colour of law  
To kill him; this lo! doth my conscience gnaw.  
And yet more; the number here in ire so stirred,  
That they would have him hanged, and not  
speak one word.

Which deed if we do, where are our like mon-  
sters?

First to apprehend an ant undetected  
By any colour that any word consturs,  
To be either detected or suspected,  
And not only straight unto death directed,  
But die, not suffered to speak; defame of us  
That perpetual trump will blow in shame of us.

Wherefore for us (and not for him), as I said,  
I sue to you, as he hath sued to me  
To hear him speak; which speech of you heard  
and weighed,  
As you shall be agreed, so shall I agree  
To hang him or save him, as we cause shall see.  
This tale thus told, down the fly again flitteth,  
And where he erst did sit, there he again sitteth.



**T**he fly's former fine tale no whit stirreth the gross flies to the hearing of the ant. Whereupon the butterfly (that was an arbiter) fleeth into the tree, labouring the flies to have the ant heard speak ere he die. *Cap. 55.*

[*The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.*]

**W**ITH this a chirm in murmuring there fell Amongst them all, they in flocks flocking anon,

Here and there a flock, like sort to like to tell Their minds, and some praised, some dispraised the tale gone.

This tale showeth this fly honest and wise (saith one);

He is a false flattering fly (saith another);

He said well, but he meant ill (said some other).

Th'ant hath bribed him (quoth one); he is corrupt sure.

An ant bribe a fly? (quoth another) wherewith?

With one of his eggs? that is a sore allure

To tempt a fly! Nay (quoth one), this is the pith:

He is a spy for the spiders, I see even sith.

I heard no word (quoth one) to suspect him by.

(Quoth one) All his words sound suspiciously.

So many heads, so many wits there were seen.

The honest flies that fly's tale honestly did brook;

The contrary, took his tale contrary clean.

I heard by some flies' words, and saw by their look,

That th'ill sort the good sort against their wills  
took.

Good flies would have suffered and have sit  
even still

Rather than have risen, by force of th'ill.

But forth he must (they say) that the devil doth  
drive;

Things are not wrought by wisdom in such a  
rout; [trive,

Will, and not wisdom, must such matters con-  
All surety of safety to bring in a doubt,

Or to set safety undoubtedly quite out;

In which safety such flies as sat fast before,  
Must leave hold to take hold on contrary shore.

[Aa.vi.r.]

They being now driven, they must do as they  
shall,

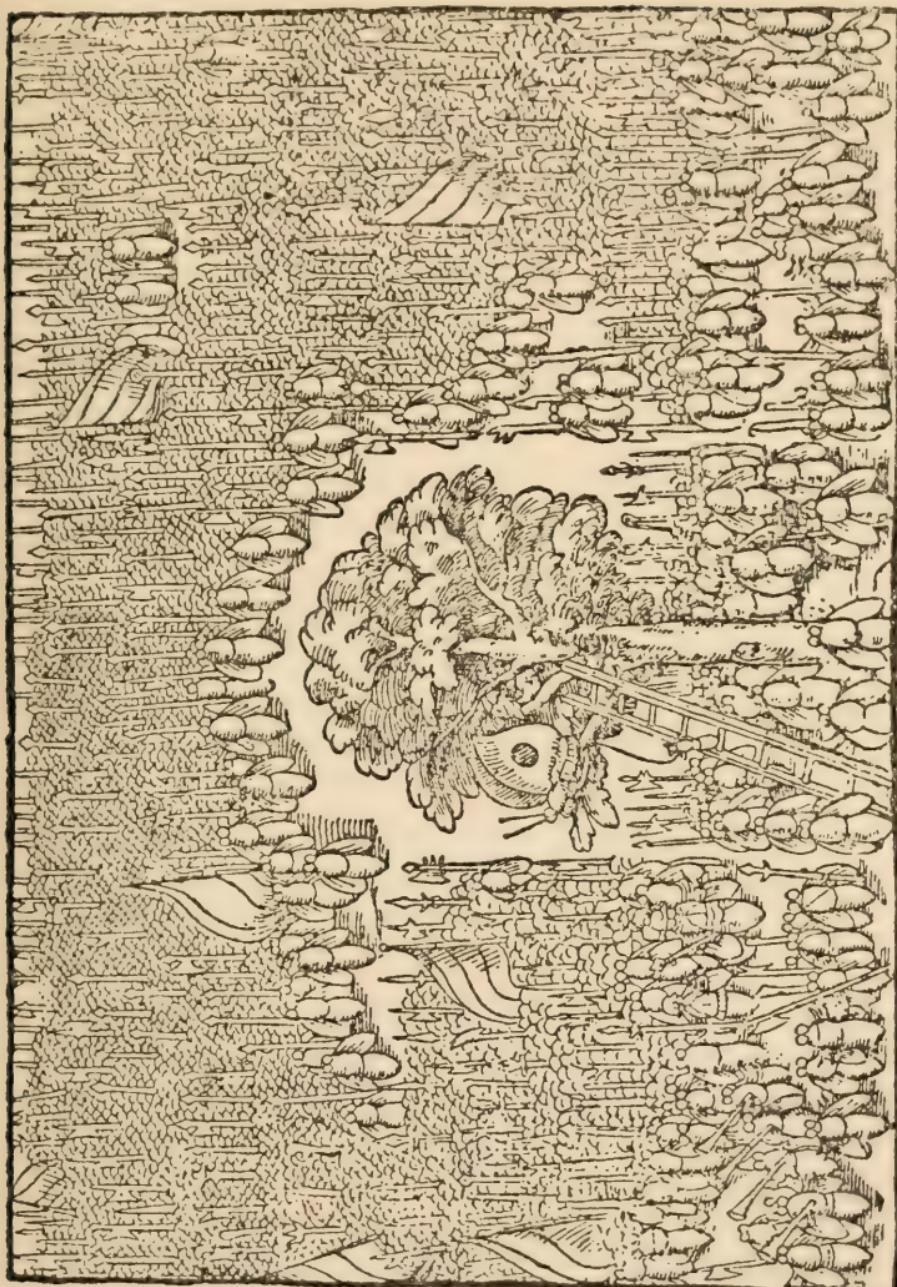
And not as they would, and for this case in  
hand, [all.

Hang the ant forthwith! cried the most number  
The blunt butterfly, that arbiter had stand,  
Whipped into the tree as fierce as a fire brand,  
And at silence had upon the trumpet's blast,  
He must blow his blast, or else his heart must  
brast.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 28 is here given in  
original.*]

**T**he butterfly (to get th'ant to be heard)  
telleth his tale in such rude manner and matter,  
that anon he setteth them all (well nigh) to-  
gether by the ears. But upon his gross tale  
grossly told (much more liked than the fly's  
finer tale) they grant to hear the ant speak.

Cap. 56.



[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in  
original.]

[gg.

**W**HAT a sort of captain cobblers have we here?

Under our grand captain, I charge everyone  
Keep silence, and obedience all in fear.  
In the circumcision that we go upon,  
Think you the victory lieth on your hands, not  
one.

Sharmish ye may, and like capon cockers cock,  
But we butterflies must here bide the shock.

And why not we wasps (quoth one) as well as  
you? [dor]

Why not we dors as well as both? (quoth one)  
Why not flies and gnats? (quoth one) of each  
sort now;

Being a huge heap, exceeding all number,  
To overcome yonder spider senior,  
As well as fewer great lubbers. Mark this  
mark:

The old proverb saith, many hands make light  
work.

So light work their light heads, for light hands  
made,

That each one's light fist was bent to other's  
ear,

Sort against sort, they anon entered such trade,  
That I thought they would all have gone by  
th'ears there,

Till their captain, with cap in hand, to forbear  
In beseeching entreated them. Which heat  
gone,

Let the butterfly speak! they cried everyone.

The butterfly bluntly thus entered again.

What devil! flies, be you friends? be you so  
hastise

That your friends may not speak their wills  
plat and plain?  
A devil's name (I say) your chatting tongues  
chastise;  
I ween you eat no skins meat but daw pasties.  
Peace, dawpates, while I tell a thing now re-  
jounst  
In my head, which to utter I am compounst.

Ye would have the ant hanged, before he be  
heard,  
For that think you most policy. As scons  
my dear:  
Ye may not hear him first and hang him after-  
ward;  
But every fly thinking himself stood now here,  
Where this ant standeth, and at hanging even  
as near,  
Should it not sting him like sting of an adder  
To think to be turned without speech from this  
ladder?

Wise flies say it is sin to lie on the devil;  
Then hear the truth told of this present poor  
ant;  
Who that can 'cuse him, let him allege the evil.  
But my soul from salvation slide to hell aslant  
If he in our bitterness showed any want  
Of consonable differency in his words dolt,  
But between both parts stood upright as a bolt.

You all, weighing this thing in ponderation,  
In hearing of him what equality ye show,  
And in not hearing him; what slanderation  
To us all shall grow! that since ye all do know,

Weigh it quickly, and your minds therein out-blown.

Down he flew : whereupon the flies said they would [told.]

Hear th'ant speak. And thereupon this tale he



*The ant prayeth to be heard speak thoroughly before any part of his tale be adjudged, and then they to adjudge the whole as standeth with equity. First alleging better to clear himself from offending the flies; finally giving them (as it seemeth) friendly counsel (touching this strife), grounded upon this common saying: Before thou aught begin, have an eye to the end.*

Cap. 57.

[*The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.*] ]

[*The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.*] ]

MY masters, flies here all in general,  
And each one particularly I humbly pray,  
What things I shall touch, general or special,  
To take to the best. And first that I may,  
As remembrancer of your remembrance, lay  
One special mean forth here remembered to be,  
Drawing hearers in all things to equity.

And equity in all things to give or to take  
(Among other virtues) is a virtue pure;  
Inequity, for wrong, no way can make  
Where equity is set and settled sure;  
For equity in no wise may endure  
Balance, to any one side cast or driven;  
Equity equally keepeth the balance even.

Which mean for which equity to be obtained,  
Is that hearers, in hearing this my case,  
See that definitive judgment be refrained,  
In any part thereof to take any place  
Till the whole be heard; which hearing to  
purchase,  
Is my great suit, beseeching all to suspend  
Judgment in every part till all parts take end.

First for me, next for you and me, last for you,  
I sue to be heard. And first for me, mark all.  
From all offence by me done to you here now,  
Since I came in this case that doth here fall,  
I am cleared by one unsuspect for partial;  
I mean that worshipful master butterfly,  
Who trieth me to have dealt here indifferently.

He cleareth me since I came; and before I  
came,  
If any fly (justly) to my charge can lay  
In anything weighing the weight of a dram,

By word or deed, either open or privy,  
 That ever I hurt fly any manner way,  
 Then let my punishment here be so ample  
 That all ants may thereby take an example.

But being clear since I came, and, more t'avow,  
 Being clear till I came from word and deed ill,  
 Alas ! why will ye kill me, who hurteth not you,  
 Nor never did hurt you, nor never will,  
 Nor never can, though will would ill fulfil?  
 This for myself, as for myself proved,  
 I hope myself sure from harm by you moved.

Secondly, for you and me both, this mean I,—  
 If ye draw the blood of me (thus innocent),  
 As the loss is small, so naught win ye thereby,  
 But (as is said) infamy of endless extent ;  
 Which pain from me and shame from you to pre-  
 vent,

The safe salve for both sides is this to decree,  
 Save you my life, and that saveth your honesty.

Third and last point, naught for me, all for  
 you,

Proving me not only you no whit to hate,  
 But much to love, a tale I'll tell and a vow,  
 Which you hearing and following in steady  
 state,

Shall steadily stay you from harm in debate  
 That hangeth over your heads much more than  
 ye see,

Wherein for you, and not for me, (I say) hear  
 me.

Among many precepts philosophical  
 Given to all persons to take profit by,  
 For time, place, and case present, above all

One serveth in sentence most singularly.  
 The words short, the matter long, the reason  
     high;    [pend—  
 Which words and matter on these words do de-  
 Ere thou aught begin, have an eye to the end.

This pure precept, as all oft in words say it,  
 If all did do it, in effectual deed,  
 So that our deeds did it as our words weigh it,  
 Oh, what commodity thereby should proceed!  
 Our full felicity should thereupon breed,  
 As contrarily breedeth in contrary show,  
 Infelicity, as we feelingly know.

Who would begin a fray and his foe therein kill  
 If he looked to th'end, that should hang him  
     therefore?

I ween all the world should be kept from all ill  
 Kept we this lesson well in practised lore,  
 To th'end of beginning to look evermore  
 Before we begin, for when we have begun  
 The leaving off lightly is not lightly won.

Small things begun, without looking to their  
     end,

Some oft to ill end, great loss, and jeopardy;  
 Great things begun then none eye on th'end  
     t'attend,

At (or ere) their beginning we must agree  
 To be our much more discommodity.

As things greater and smaller differ in size,  
 So differeth here discommodity likewise.

[Bb.i.r.—hh.

And of all our great things no one of more  
     weight,

Nor thereby more meet th'end therein to weigh  
 At beginning, than is that bitter bait

Of wretched war, the very lock and key  
 That latcheth and locketh us all from quiet stay.  
 Who that (in rash roof) beginneth to contend,  
 He repenteth beginning ere he come to end.

It is a thing right far beyond an ant's reach  
 To blaze the plat of poison generally  
 Set abroach by war; but short some to fetch,  
 War's harm and good stand both unspeakably;  
 Both are (I say) unspeakable; for why?  
 War hath done more harm than tale of tongue  
 can hold;  
 War hath done no good, and naught cannot be  
 told.

War hath wrought such woe that all flies com-  
 monly  
 And spiders eke, of which two sorts I speak,  
 Having in all times had experency  
 Of rash beginning of war, the peace to break,  
 They seeing (in their war) their winning weak,  
 Would lose half the good they had to peace to  
 fall  
 Rather than jeopard in war goods, life, and all,

And of both sorts in this case, wearied in war,  
 Flies have had ever cause to mislike war most;  
 When spiders and flies have fallen at this like  
 jar, [right boast,  
 For quarrels, wherein flies might most their  
 Whoever had the right, the flies the field lost.  
 To one score spiders slain, flies slain twenty  
 score,  
 And much of their offspring lost for evermore.

[Bb.i.v.]

Which showeth (as spiders call it) that no sedition

Can have good success in flies inferior  
 By stubborn war, but by humble petition :  
 For thing interior, or exterior  
 Flies must sue to the spider superior.  
 They take this as a full hold not to be remissed ;  
 Wellframed flies will suffer and not resist.

Flies wrecks in wars in time passed, if flies re-volve

[been,

How spiders' cobwebs flies' sepulchres have  
 Your wise quiet retire shall this war dissolve.  
 But if smart of time passed be forgotten clean,  
 Cast eye to peril at eye presently seen ;  
 View yonder cobweb castle with indifferent eye,  
 And mark whether ye be matched indifferently.

Behold the battlements in every loop

How th'ordnance lieth flies far and near to  
 fach ;

[group

Behold how every piece that lieth there in  
 Hath a spider gunner with ready fired match ;  
 Behold on the walls spiders waking ware  
 watch ;

The watch spider in the tower alarum to strike  
 At approach of any number showing warlike.

See th'impregnable fort, in every border  
 How every spider with his weapon doth stand,  
 So thoroughly harnessed, in so good order,  
 The capital spider with weapon in hand.

For that sort of soldiers, so manfully manned  
 With cobwebs like casting nets all flies to quell,  
 My heart shaketh at the sight ; behold, it is  
 hell !

[Bb.ii.r.]

Against whole strength there, your weakness  
here behold;  
Some have harness, most have none, all out of  
'ray;  
Captains practised politic and bold  
Few or none have ye this army to convey,  
But each in other's neck, as sheep start astray.  
Ordnance meet for the ship ye bring to the  
field;  
But force without order winneth victory sold.

And put case that of you forty thousand flies  
Thirty thousand shall 'scape, and his window  
win,  
Yet if each one of you in himself surmise  
That he shall be one that shall die entering in,  
What one fly (of all flies) will th'assault begin?  
No one, but that one that from home now come  
Shall think himself wisest, that soonest goeth  
home.

But to die all and in this window nought gain,  
Of that said practice of time past assureth ye.  
To venture life and suffer death are things  
twain.

Venturing of life, t'obtain right, oft see we;  
But to venture life where death hath certain-  
ty,—  
For these kinds of right to die while ye may  
live,  
No wise fly will, but right rather overgive.

But if your harms of time passed be forgotten,  
Warning of present harms at present time take;  
Of which two measures if none may be moten,

Time passed, nor time present (of which two I  
spake), [make,  
Let the third, time to come, be mean th'end to  
Weighing that in time to come the end must  
come  
To one end of four, which follow here in some.

[*Bb.ii.v.*]  
After this war begun, either both parts shall  
Take end with condition as both parts can  
'gree,  
Or continue in war time perpetual,  
Or the flies (by the spiders) conquered shall be,  
Or the spiders conquered by the flies. Now see  
How in each one end of these four shall arise  
Painful perilous penuries to all flies.

First, if ye, after a time had in conflict  
Take end with the spider by composition,  
Beside the flies that to death shall be addicted  
The survivors shall receive such condition  
At the spiders' hand as the distribution  
Shall make flies at end bid fie on their winning,  
And after that end repent their beginning.

Second, this war continuing continually,  
Every year, month, week, day, hour, every  
minute,  
Many flies shall die, and all may fear to die.  
What fly can be sure one hour's life t'execute  
At points of all weapons, ever had in pursuit  
In undoubted death and doubtful deadly life?  
This end sheweth small difference, where reason  
is rife.

Thirdly, if the spider do conquer you flies,  
 Whatsoever fly then himself best behaves,  
 The best and the worst all in one rate shall  
     rise; [bond slaves;  
 Now, frank, free, franklin flies, then all vile  
 Now fly in light windows, then sit in dark  
     caves. [clear

Flies beginning war, ending thus, they shall  
 Their hell or purgatory begin even here.

[Bb.iii.7.]

The fourth, if you flies shall the spider conquer,  
 Then shall all spiders go to wrack first, no  
     doubt,

And after shall the flies follow everywhere.

When flies have killed spiders that stay the  
     rude rout,

Then fly against fly common cut-throat most  
     stout. [th'other,

Four ends in this one war; show th'one and  
 The last being worst, each end worse than  
     other.

In time past, time present, and in time to come,  
 Since ye have won, do win, nor shall win here  
     aught,

Better wend your ship aloof and take sea room  
 Than run here on rocks, and to shipwreck be  
     brought.

It is too far fetched, and further too dear  
     bought, [strifes

To fetch and buy things with no less loss in  
 But with loss both of all your livings and lives.

Here have I said my mind, under principles  
     few;

First, desiring you to hear me thoroughly,  
 Ere ye judge any part of what I should show,

And then to judge me by equity equally.  
 Whereunto for hearing in this case sued I,  
 First for me, next for you and me, last for you,  
 Of which process abridged, brief pith approacheth now.

For me, the flies' and butterflies' tales I  
 weighed

To my discharge, since I came of all offence  
 And before I came, my discharge myself laid :  
 Wherein my case being guiltless innocence,  
 For you and me, both in reason and conscience,  
 To save both sides upright, this counsel I gave,  
 You to save my life, your honesty to save.

[Bb.iii.v.]

For you and not me, in your present quarrel,  
 On this principle my whole talk did depend—  
 Ere we aught begin, namely, thing of peril,  
 Wisdom willeth us to have an eye to the end.  
 In perilous quarrel's case to contend  
 Chiefly this : in time past, present, and to come,  
 How ye sped, and be like to speed, I showed  
 the sum.

But to end at beginning : you casting eye  
 At this poor counsel of poor Antony ant,  
 Of shape and good wit small, of good-will  
 great and high,  
 I shall rejoice, hoping here shall be no want  
 Of equity, in my discharge this instant,  
 Which I humbly pray. And so to end to fall,  
 I say no more, but the great God save you all.

This done, a noise began of such a buzzing,  
 Each one fly blowing in another fly's ear,  
 As if ten millions of flies had been buzzing ;

And all by this tale so astonished in fear,  
That most of them their weapons could scantily  
bear.

Th'ant's persuasions, in dread of death, struck  
them so, [go !

That hundreds cried out, Home again let us  
With this monster grand captain, the great  
bragger,

Was much amazed and vengeably vexed,  
To see these flies now so unsteadily stagger,  
So late so ready to bring their foes perplexed.

This time (thought he) should give warning to  
the next;

If he 'scaped this, at all times to beware  
With faint fond flies to fisk again a warfare.

[Bb.iv.r.]

 He began to cast that in common known  
guise

In all like tumults that flies do thus procure,  
Of simple flies most are pardoned that thus rise,  
But captain flies (as he is now) are hanged sure;  
Of which present danger to put delay in' ure  
He wound into that tree, and silence won  
The flies t'encourage again, thus he begun.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in the original.*]

¶ Th'ant hath set the flies in such fear of the  
spiders, that most are ready to run away.  
Whom to stay, the captain fly deviseth th'ant  
to set the spiders in like fear of them by a tale  
told on the same ground that he told this, in  
pain of hanging at his return. Cap. 58.

[*The plate as on p. 226 is here given in original.*]

[ii.]

[*The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.*]

SIRS, I see well this tale of this ant here told,  
To pass this seen peril, putteth you in such dread,  
That many are minded to leave off their hold,  
As though leaving off now should your safe-guard breed.

As it should not, nor for that it should indeed  
His tale is told no whit, but all told for this,—  
To save himself, and those spiders, friends of his.

He seeth what and why he saith, which you see not.

He foreseeth if fear drive us to run away,  
That we shall not only lose this window plat,  
But in fleeing, like fleas killed in chase from ray.

[day]

Which shall be (he knoweth well) our leisureless  
To be jailors to ants, and he thereupon  
(Being his own jailor) breaketh jail and is gone.

This way our enemies win all, and we lose all;  
They laugh, and we weep; they live, and we die;

They in fame, we in shame perpetual.

And without cost, pain, or danger, by and by,  
This ant at liberty, immediately.

Thus, where th'ant's words show him to be your great friend,

Pith of th'ant's words prove him to be your great fiend.

Some clarks (of whom this little ant not least  
clark)

Can fine lies as finely as fine true tales tell;  
Right side or wrong side, they can turn in each  
work,

And make flies take either side true as gospel.  
Which turn in this tale to appear in sequel,  
I have devised a way (having your consent);  
Hear it, and speak to it as your breasts are  
bent.

As this ant Clarkly (or craftily here)  
Hath cast many mazing mists before your eyes,  
Of much dread by much danger here to appear,  
So upon his life or death, let him devise  
Upon the same ground that your fear doth  
arise, [dreads  
A speech to the spiders, to show what deep  
He can draw or drive into their hearts and  
heads.

Which ground is this,—ere any wight aught  
begin,

Have an eye to th'end the wise wight sayeth  
(sayeth he),

Wherein (to match the fear that you be now in),  
If he bring spiders in as much fear of ye  
As he hath brought you in fear of them to be,  
Then at return pardon him, goods, life, and  
land;

Which if ye do not, then hang him out of hand.

Be it so, cried all. Then said this one that all  
leads, [stands;

Choose forty flies to guard this ant that here  
Twenty whose hands we trust more than their  
heads;

And twenty whose heads we trust more than  
their hands;  
All of heart trusty, both power and policy  
bands; [these  
And for fear of false measures among all  
Send some that somewhat leave behind, loth  
to lose.

This said, and th'ant sworn his best here to  
be bent,  
An herald with trumpet and truce banner  
'splayed,  
For their safe conduct to the spider they sent.  
The spider warned watch to see their coming  
stayed.  
It should (to his honour) be reproach, he said,  
To treat with traitors in order of arms,  
But of grace he granteth them to come without  
harms.

The herald and that rest to the captain fly  
And all flies, the spider's pleasure did declare;  
Wherewith, to guard th'ant, they chose out  
flies forty,  
Whom while they were choosing, one couple  
there,  
Two flies of busy wit, as sundry flies are,  
Fell to divining by conjecture to show,  
What should in this message, and messenger,  
grow.

How sayst thou, my friend (quoth th'one fly)  
to this gear?  
What wouldst thou give to have the ant's office  
now?  
Give (quoth th'other fly) not paring of a pear.

Nor I (quoth he), but would rather make a vow  
 To leave all that I have, and live at the plough,  
 Than take it. What's thy mind therein? (quoth  
 th'other) [brother.

That shalt thou hear (hearing this, quoth he),  
 If so fall that th'ant bring not spiders in fear,  
 Then seeth he himself hanged at coming  
 again;

And bringing spiders in fear, when he cometh  
 there,

He is in danger of the head spider's disdain,  
 Which is another death. And to 'scape both  
 twain,

I take it to be a busy piece of work,  
 And to shoot at, a crooked crabbed mark.

For both these cases (quoth th'other fly) put  
 case:

In either case of both, th'ant's death do ensue.  
 Yet in which case of both death shall first take  
 place, [eschew.

That will th'ant labour, first and most, to  
 Whose first peril in hands of us flies to view,  
 It shall enforce the ant in all the force he may,  
 For fear of death by flies, the spiders to fray.

[Cc.i.r.  
 Note (quoth th'other fly) to this, this objec-  
 tion,—

Nature in the spiders and the ant joineth nigh,  
 Which shall make th'ant jeopard much by  
 affection

In spiteful words to comfort spiders spitefully,  
 Rather than discomfort them thus fearingly.

I have seen some that for this like cause up-  
 stood, [harm than good.

Whose crafty couched tales have done more

They have done so (quoth th'other) and they  
do so,

Where fear is small, by penalty being small;  
But where penalty (as here) to death doth go,  
In the ant's like tales few trip, or none at all.  
Many say oft, hunger pierceth the stone wall;  
But hunger and fear, where both come in like  
ure,

Fear pierceth as deep as hunger, make ye sure.

The father his son, and the son his father,  
The wife her husband, and the husband his  
wife:

The brother, his brother, all these we gather  
To have seen (compelled by fear), where fear  
was rife,

Bewray and betray each other in fear of life,  
Sealed see we so natural a foolish kind elf,  
But he will hang his father to save himself,

Oft (quoth th'other) 'tis so, sometimes other-  
wise. [have

Of flies condemned, the father and son, both  
Upon their knees sued with flowing watery  
eyes,

Each himself to be hanged the other to save.  
That suit (quoth th'other fly) is no common  
slave;

But in his appearance so strange a stranger,  
That his presence (this time) will bring no  
danger.

[Cc.i.v.]

But contrary, in these like storms we see oft,  
Where ants, spiders, or flies, th'ants like tale  
must tell,

Or they in authority, forced up aloft,

Not for that their fetters up trust their truths  
well,  
But (as this ant) made instruments of peril,  
There shall fear force them, for fear of sus-  
picion,  
To stick fast to their forcer's disposition.

They wot (or they ween), that they be watchéd  
so,  
That if they be but suspect to wring or wry,  
They be undone: I would rather choose my foe  
To be my judge, in case judicially,  
Than my friend in this fearful forced state, for  
why? [rate  
Fear of forcers shall force him more aid to  
To his foe, whom they love, than his friend,  
whom they hate.

Ye say well (said th'other), but I say to this,  
Said suspected sorts, in fear of authority,  
Notwithstanding suspicion dangerous is,  
Yet some, in faction or affection we see,  
Or other corruption, so affected be,  
Though life lie upon it, yet by mean direct,  
Or indirect, they work their affection's effect.

And so for this ant, our sole cause of talk now.  
Whatever oath in promise he for fear make,  
To bring spiders in fear, to bring them to bow;  
Yet, either for nature's or affection's sake,  
I fear he will wilily the wrong way take.  
And I hope (quoth th'other) his present peril  
Shall stiffly strain him to strengthen our  
quarrel.

[ Cc.ii.r. (?)

 But between you and me, in fine thus is it,—  
 You fear here the worst, and I hope here the  
 best;

You in which fear, and I in which hope, let us  
 sit

Silently till practise by proof have expressed  
 In what scope (for what 'scape) the ant's tale  
 shall rest.

The other fly being agreed unto this,  
 To see this end, both attend as meet now is.

This talk done, forty flies, and th'ant with them,  
 flew

Straight to the spider, before whom th'ant now  
 stands :

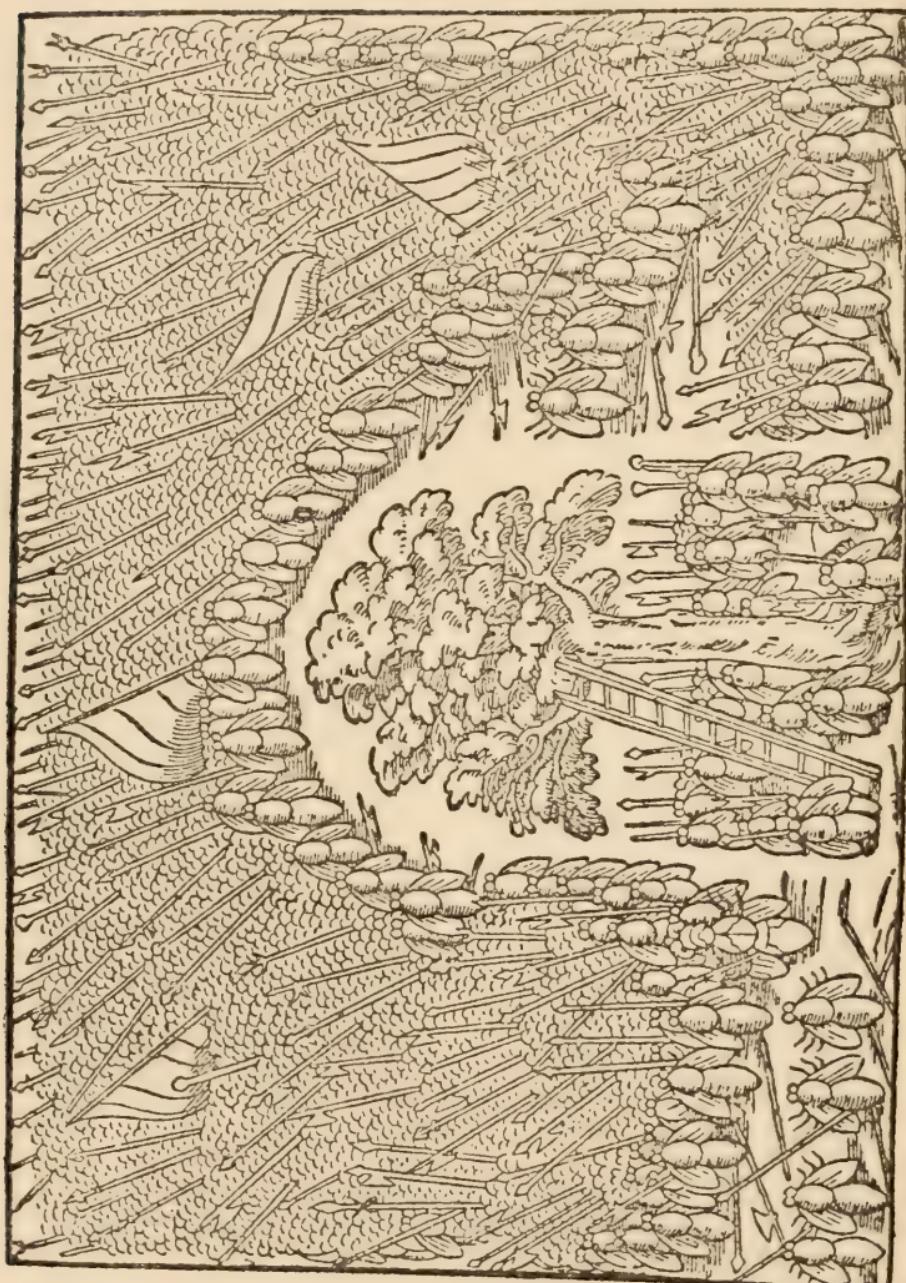
But how th'ant fleeth now, that shall erstsoon  
 ensue.

The spider was guarded round about with  
 bands, [wands,

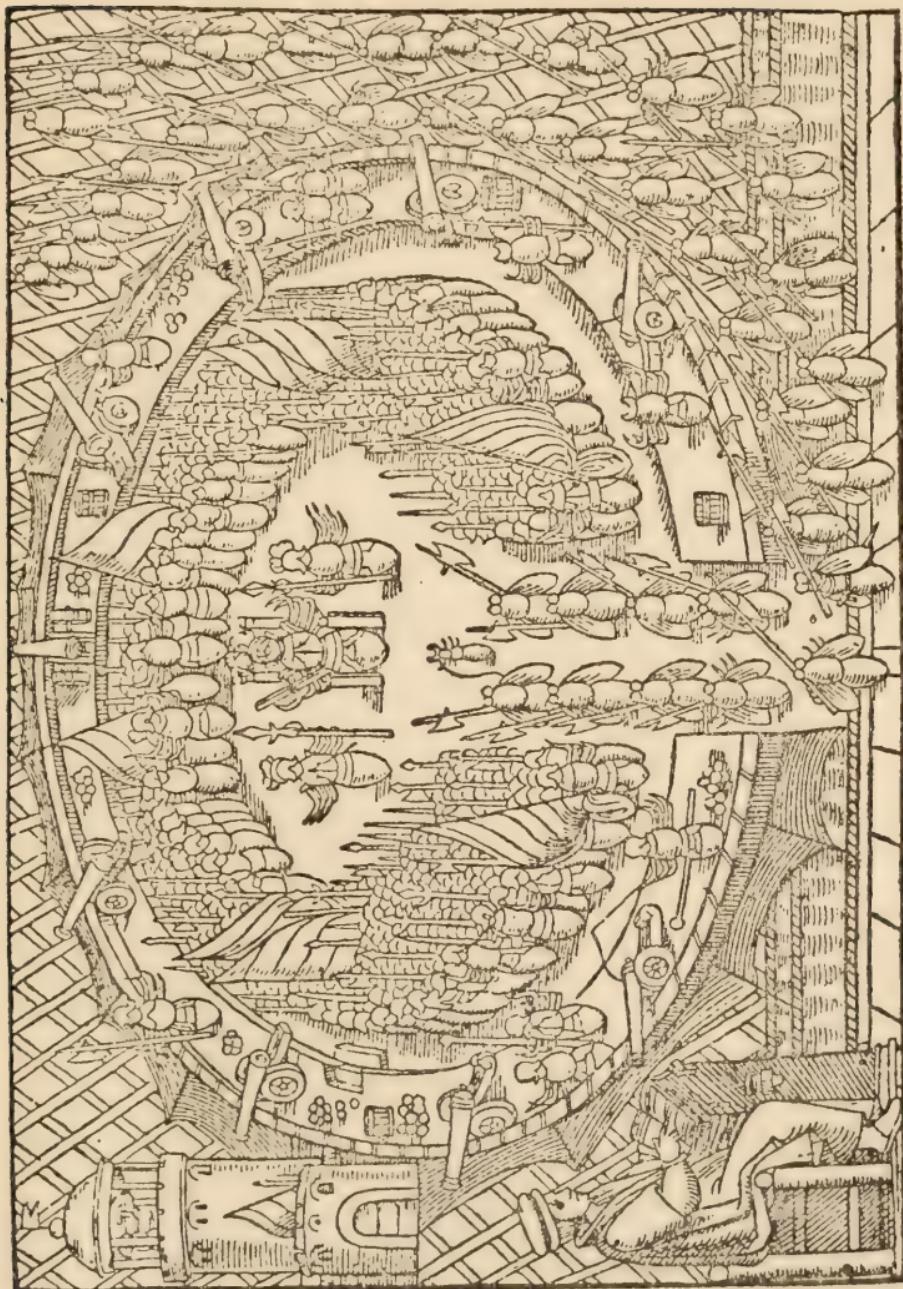
Saving a lane, made with tipstaves and other  
 That th'ant to the spider, in hearing and show,  
 Might say (as he did say) at curtsey made low.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in the original.*]

¶Th'ant, after entering in talk (before the head  
 spider) he to him, and all the spiders (upon this  
 said ground: ere thou aught begin, have an  
 eye to the end), inveigheth what he can to set  
 the spiders in fear of the flies. Cap. 59.



[kk.



HONOURABLE sir, may it your honour  
like  
To consider that in affairs mere mundane,  
Policy and power do not the stroke so strike  
That strife (at stave's end) for victory or gain  
Winneth alway the strong, on the weak t'ob-  
tain;

But sometime we see fortune, hap, or chance  
The weaker above the stronger in strife ad-  
vance.

Whereof myself here mirror to behold,  
Some policy, politic heads think I have,  
And of your power at hand might have been  
bold;

But policy and power myself now to save,  
Chance would not suffer, but chance both away  
drave. [wrought,

Suddenness of chance this change in me hath  
From liking lively life, to doleful death  
brought.

With halter here about my neck, as ye see,  
Respite have I won, to see you ere I die;  
For two things,—one to pray all to pray for me,  
Another (as I am bound naturally)  
To warn all of deep danger here presently,  
At eye, in hand. But ye your heads draw near,  
To hear and use my counsel following here.

This sage saying, the wise have said and say,—  
Have an eye to the end, ere thou aught begin.  
Of this debate begun, then, th'end here weigh  
What small or no pleasure ye can therein win,  
And what great displeasure ye may be brought  
in;

Proving you (at best) nought to win by this war,  
And proving you (at worst) utterly to mar.

[Cc.ii.r. (?)

One point of four this strife cometh to of need,  
Either after strife t'agree by agreement,  
Or ever to strive and never be agreed,  
Or you to subdue the flies by the sword's dent,  
Or the flies to conquer you, by force fervent.  
Now if this beginning shall further begin,  
Cast a line to th'end, and meet what ye shall  
win.

First, t'agree after time of strife tasted ;  
In mean time on both sides the mortality,  
Your cobwebs, their cottages, worn and  
wasted,  
All windows vacant of most fertility,  
All from good order, to sinful civility ;  
The best end for both sides, being extented,  
The beginning (on both sides) shall be repented.

Next, to continue in perpetual strife ;  
Purgatory that (nay, that is hell, say I)  
Better dead than ever live in fear to lose life,  
As both sides shall live evermore dyingly,  
Still starting from sleep, all slept with waking  
eye.

I better like mine end, looking for end straight,  
Than thus upon this endless end still to wait.

Third, if you in subjection the flies subdue,  
Th'account bringeth small gain to that end  
wedded ;  
All flies ye cannot kill ; what shall then ensue ?  
As many as ye keep in dread, to be headed,  
So many you dread ; then who is most dreaded ?  
One fly put in fear, putteth you in fear of ten.  
Tell here your cards, and tell what ye win then.

[Cc.ii.v.]

Fourth, if the flies conquer you, oh dreadful day !

Dead in half a day ye shall be every one.  
Of the three other ways in every one way  
Both sides (in effect) like ill end upon ;  
But in this fourth (fear whereof is my most moan),  
Where all flies shall win all and bravely boast all,  
All spiders shall lose all, and spiders be lost all.

If ye reply here, and say flies (to this day)  
Never won this way, but ever in loss lapped ;  
In rejoinder, rejoining with you, this I say,—  
It happeth in one hour, that before never happed, [trapped ;  
As it happeth me this hour with flies to be  
And that this is more like to hap this present,  
Than it erst hath been, mark this present bend bent.

See (I say) each one his death here (as who say)

Five thousand spiders on th'one side to fight  
Against fifty thousand flies (oh, fearful fray),  
A heap to a handful, the more side so light,  
The less side so heavy : 'tis a heavy sight  
In sundry respects, wherein no one of any  
Feareth me so much as so few to so many.

Were they all cowards, as they are hardy flies,  
Not the least fly there but he dare bite his bit  
On the greatest ox that in the shambles lies ;

No weapon but the flap shall make him thence  
flit,  
Of the which weapon spiders can skill no wit.  
But though flies but cowardly stack to the  
helm,  
Yet must the number this cobweb overwhelm.

[Cc.iii.r.]

¶ Ten to one (in war), an unmeet matchéd  
match, [sun;  
They will march on as thick as motes in the  
Ten thousand (in a moment) if ye dispatch,  
Twenty thousand more upon spear point will  
run; [gun.  
The desperate dreadeth neither bill, bow, nor  
And what gain you to kill flies thick as motes,  
The rest entering on you straight, and cut your  
throats?

And though they guess that many of them shall  
die,  
Yet if each one think sure that 'scape he shall,  
As I think all so think assuredly,  
Then that persuasion shall persuade them all,  
Each one with other straight in strife to fall  
Who may be foremost fly, with courage haut,  
Th'onset to give, this castle to assault.

Your wisdom and your wisdoms all, I know,  
Much more can here consider than I can;  
Howbeit, good will willeth me warning to show  
Of harm to come in this begun to scan  
Before the end, what th'end may be, and then  
So flee the worst, to fall (as you think best),  
At some point with the flies to be at rest.



¶Th'ant, having brought the spiders in great fear of the multitude of flies, the head spider taking great displeasure with the ant for the same, he answereth th'ant's tale so that he bringeth all the spiders in courage again, giving (in his own name and all theirs) defiance to the flies.

Cap. 60.

[The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original.]

[The plate as on p. 253 is here given in original.]

THE spiders at th'ant's tale were much abashed;  
 The flies (as th'ant set them out) feared the spiders sore.  
 Their weapons fell from hand, they were quite quashed. [rumoured roar  
 Take peace with flies, they cried. At which  
 The head spider (with wetted tusks foamed like a boar)  
 In that rage, had not his honour lain thereon,  
 Had th'ant had a thousand lives, he had been gone.

At this hurly burly, that spider le grand  
 In his chair fretting furiously he frowneth;  
 His look was commission, silence to command.  
 Whereupon stately and sternly he entereth  
 A discourse the ant's last told tale to meet with.  
 But first th'ant to discredit, to th'ant's dispraise,  
 On th'ant's properties this spider thus inveighs.

Friends, I perceive the ant's tale (more false than fine),  
 Maketh you your own shadows to dread (as it were)  
 To proceed in war; but stay a little time.  
 Lift up your hearts all, and each one lend one ear, [swer.  
 Till ye have heard how I this tale shall an-  
 But ere I touch the pith of th'ant's tale in this,  
 Hear of what property th'ant himself is.

The ant (come into the world out of the shell)  
 For a time (in his time) creepeth on the ground,  
 As we spiders creep here, and his piss as fell  
 In stinging as our poison, well nigh is found.  
 Which properties work him toward our nature wound; [age,  
 Whereby ants be and have been taken in all Our half cousins, allied in side half lineage.

This time is the ant the creeping ant named;  
 In time after this time, he to more time grown,  
 Wings doth he gather, and those in him framed, [known.  
 The flying ant thenceforth he is called and Then disperseth his nature, in two natures thrown.  
 He participateth with both these in this wise,— A creeper with spiders, and a flier with flies.

When he crept hither first (at my request here), I was deceived in his age (as the devil would); I thought him too young to have wings, by a year;

But now, he winged with flies, his flying tale told,

Doth show him old enough and a year too old.  
Mark this creeping ant, since wings wound him aloft,

How he playeth on both hands, as jugglers do

He courageth the flies now, discouraging us ;  
But didst thou not erst promise me otherwise ?  
Here is th'ant brought to a narrow straight, as thus,—

If th'ant tell the spiders how he fraid the flies,  
Then seeth he his death at flies' hands straight arise ;

And if he say he couraged the flies, that lie  
Shall make the spiders hate him, without cause why.

Th'ant, having to this demand good answer none,

None answer made he, but stood still silently.  
Lo (quoth the spider) is not th'ant a good one ?  
Were he charged in law herewith by and by,  
This obstinate silence should show him guilty.  
But th'ant himself now thus far forth disclosed,  
Go we now to th'ant's matter, erst preposed.

His great ground is this (whereon the whole dependeth) :

View th'end of all, ere the beginning be won ;  
Wherein if he allege here charge that extendeth  
To us spiders, that we this war first begun,  
That charge is wrong charged, for that charge must run

Unto the flies, for they invaders here be,  
And we but defenders, as all eyes may see.

And for the four points, whereof one must  
th'end make

In three of which he laid loss indifferently  
To lot on both sides alike, I undertake  
In few words to prove that tale a loud lewd lie.  
First, war here taken up conditionally,  
Flies never won end of us after beginning,  
But flies (at end) ever bade fie on their win-  
ning.

The second, concerning war continual,  
In wet open field them, in dry warm house we,  
Between these two plats, though the distance  
be small, [parts three

The difference is great. Of the year's four  
(Or two parts at least) they cannot trouble ye.  
In winter, summer flies no windows keep;  
Under men's house eaves like eaves droppers  
they creep.

The third point, in our conquering of the flies,  
For fearing of all flies that we make afraid,  
The fool, or the infant, that his shadow spies  
Will oftentimes cry out in fear, calling for aid.  
But wiser folk weighing this, thus is it  
weighed,—

Like fear to be had on their conquered knaves,  
As hath the great Turk fear of his galley slaves.  
Last, to the fourth, if flies shall spiders con-  
quer,

Then are all spiders lost, as the ant saith sure,  
And flies too (say I) but as touching that fear  
For time past, of practice put memory in ure;  
For time to come, let likelihood you allure  
To search that kind of conquest, and ye shall  
see

It never was, nor is, nor never like to be.

From the beginning—it is in books to show—  
 When flies (against spiders) have thus rebelled,  
 They either had miserable overthrow  
 In rebelling, or straight after refelled.

Namely one, the which generally swelled  
 In flies against spiders the time passed six  
 year, [case clear.  
 Which one (were there no more) sheweth this

This time sundry, but chiefly, two flocks of  
 flies,

For religion, with some other thing to that,  
 One sort by east, another by west, did rise,  
 Of opinion contrary as far and flat  
 As in distance, each far from other in plat,  
 Th'one sort of both to be in right faith elect,  
 All flies (faithfully) did believe or conject.

Those flies did much harm, six or eight weeks  
 annoying,

Which time spiders had small rest, and those  
 flies less.

Spiders' cobwebs went to wrack, by destroy-  
 ing,

And flies' wealth wasted to beggary from riches  
 Forestore lashed out, in execrable excess,  
 Fruits then grown, much lost for help to get  
 them in.

How looked flies here to th'end ere they did  
 begin?

But what was the end of this? forsooth even  
 this,—

The captains, most hanged; soldiers, many  
 slain; [pillages,  
 The rest (aught worth) given in prey for

So that (to this day) they bid fie on the gain.  
Thus were these two sorts of opinions twain,  
One of the twain in the right way to be thought,  
Both brought to one end, and both brought to  
nought.

Which sheweth that where flies, in matter of  
most right,

Attempt t'attain matter right in manner wrong,  
There their wrong manner marreth their right  
matter quite.

For spiders against flies, great God's law  
standeth strong. [long

Which law (in leading flies) hath willed this  
You base inferiors to work your lord's will,  
Obey your superiors, be they good or ill.

Thus were their matter as good as it is bad,  
And we as weak, as the ant hath made you  
deem,

Yet should th'ill manner in flies here now had,  
Set that God upon them to strike strokes ex-  
treme, [seem.

As by th'example told, the show doth well  
Thus for the flies conquering of us this day,  
God's aid all days before taketh all fear away.

But put case we had not (as we have) the God's  
aid,

But both sides according to force of our  
powers, [said)

Should conquer or be conquered, or (as th'ant  
Hap happeth in one hour, as hath happed in no  
hours, [showers

Which he last alleged, to shape our sharp  
With other his framed fears, of our confusion.  
Yet th'ant here to confute, hear my conclusion.

In the latter part of his saying (I say)  
 He saith we may be destroyed as hap may fall.  
 And it must be granted that hap so fall may;  
 But grant that hap so may, ergo hap so shall—  
 That argument hath strength like a paper wall.  
 May fall, and shall fall, are far different marks  
 To shoot at; but when the sky falleth we shall  
 have larks.

For the fear, that his tongue-tromp (to you did  
 sowne)

By thus many flies to thus few spiders seen;  
 Set ten flies with ten axes, one oak to hew  
 down,  
 That oak shall be hacked at a good while, I  
 ween,  
 Ere it will shrink for flies, be it sere or green;  
 And the least twig that out of that oak can fall  
 (The oak standing still) shall slay those ten flies  
 all.

And so we oak spiders, against these twig flies,  
 Were they all great flies, as most of them be  
 gnats,

And to one of us, forty of them do rise,  
 Yet as the giant's paws pat down dandiprats,  
 So shall we put down these dandiprat brag  
 brats.

Their most number with our most strength to  
 compare, [are.

Pudding pricks they, millposts we compared

And where he saith though flies think many  
 shall die,

Yet each fly thinking himself shall 'scape with  
 life, [say I,

They will strive who shall set on first, here

At end of that strife they entered in this strife,  
 The foolhardy flies, now most ready or rife  
 To come with the first, shall feel the taste so  
     tough  
 That who cometh last shall think he cometh  
     time enough.

[*Dd.i.v.*]

Th'ant's tale (from point to point) now full an-  
     swered,

All force of our fear here it wiping away,  
 T'enforce you from fear further encouraged,  
 Hear and bear away what I shall herein say.  
 A few words, highly to your comfort this day,  
 Which shall set you all as far out of all fear  
 As the ant's tale set you all in fear whilere.

Mark all you, that in marking your enemies,  
 Their force (and not your own) do only behold  
 A deadly dreadful sight it is in your eyes ;  
 But on your own force your eyes being round  
     rolled,

The self sight of this force shall you so embold,  
 That had you no weapons here but hazel wands,  
 Yet might ye count your enemies now in your  
     hands.

Mark more, that your foes, in beholding you,  
 Are stricken in as deep dread your force to  
     view

As you are of theirs, which setteth both sides  
     even now;

Mark yet more, they have ye wrong part, you  
     have the true; [pursue,

Against God's and man's law this wrong they  
 Both which so strike them when they would pre-  
     vail, [quail.

That their attempt ever hath quailed, and shall

So coward a spider, where can be seen one  
 That will not live and die in this his known  
 right?

Should all spiders die (as few shall or none),  
 Yet in this quarrel, spiders go to bliss quite,  
 And flies to bale, without respect of respite.  
 Wherefore let the flies the ant's lesson attend,  
 At their this beginning, to have eye to th'end.

[Dd.ii.r.]

And now (at end), dear friends all, pluck up  
 your hearts;

Take your weapons in hand, and stand up  
 again; [parts;

Stick to your tackling in this plat on all  
 And as for the flies (their fare to show them  
 plain), [pain.

Whenever they come, they shall come to their  
 Stand stiff to me, and stand stiff to you I shall.  
 Flies and flies' kin, we defy you traitors all.

The spider thus answering th'ant's tale at  
 length,

From point to point, no point thereof omitted,  
 All spiders again in full courage and strength,  
 Those flies to their flock with th'ant again  
 flitted.

Two of them (to the captain known well witted)  
 To fly into the tree he straight commandeth,  
 And th'ant unto the ladder again forthwith.

[*The tailpiece as on p. 38 is here given in  
 original.*]

¶Upon defiance given by the spider to the flies,  
the ant, brought again to the flies, maketh full  
report of all said at the cobweb. At end where-  
of, two flies argue whether th'ant have deserved  
life or death, by keeping or breaking former  
commandment to bring the spiders in fear of the  
flies.

Cap. 61.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in  
original.]

[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in  
original.]

**T**HAT captain willed one of those flies to de-  
clare  
What had (since they parted) passed in this  
case,  
And if he ought added or minished there,  
The captain willed th'other, t'interrupt him in  
place,  
That truth truly might appear without deface.  
Whereupon the fly, assigned to say then,  
In a solemn order the process began.

First, th'ant's tale told the spiders he did re-  
peat, [spiders in;  
And the fear that that tale brought the  
Then, in repeat, the spider's tale he did treat  
And what recourage that did the spiders win,  
With defiance given flies, their ally, and kin.  
The captain then asked: You that went forth,  
tell me,  
Is this tale true and the whole truth? All  
said, Yea.

Two things (quoth the captain) are to touch  
here on;  
First, whether th'ant have deserved to live or  
die;  
The second, a piece of the spider's tale gone,  
Which I shall touch soon; but first th'ant's  
case let's try,  
Upon his life or death, standing presently.  
To see that case by agreement fully scanned,  
It being (I say) first case to take in hand.

It is so indeed (quoth one fly) in the tree.  
Wherein, while memory keepeth matter in  
mind,  
I pray you all patiently to hear me  
Uprightly declare (as equity doth bind)  
Without affection any wrong way to wind.  
But even as conscience to speak doth me com-  
pel,  
So shall I speak this tale, which I shall now tell.

[Dd.ii.r.]

Where I have heard wise flies talk, I have heard  
laid,  
In weighty cause, weighty consideration;  
And there's no matter more weighty to be  
weighed  
Than that in which, upon consultation  
Lieth life or death in determination.  
And presently present this ant's case mean I  
To weigh considerately, and indifferently.

Whose life or whose death before we determine,  
Which of both to determine, meet is to weigh,  
Your late determined condition, pith wherein

Was that th'ant should bring spiders in such  
like fray

Of us, as he brought us of them, and I say :  
He hath done so. So that in my conscience,  
Life and liberty must he have, to go hence.

And I say nay (quoth the fly) in the tree by :  
He hath not performed that condition at full.  
To have his life, hath he not (quoth th'other fly)  
To make proof appear here to wits quick and  
dull :

That performance will we reason, if ye will.  
Be it (quoth th'other fly), but all flies give an  
ear,

To one thing good for all away to bear.

My brother fly, (and I seeming here to vary)  
Both being on one part, seeming on parts  
twain,

In that in this one point, we are contrary  
Each one to other, it may make you retain  
And detain a doubt, whether we both remain  
Constant, on that part that we profess, or no.  
But hear me further here, ere we further go.

[Dd.ii.v.]

Th'argument of us twain, is only this one,  
Concerning the condition touched formerly ;  
Either by performance, or performance none,  
How the ant's desert standeth, to live or to die.  
Th'ant should live saith he; th'ant should die  
(say I).

Now consider that this present argument  
Is to principal case but an incident.

Our chief coming is on spiders to make war,  
Because we no way else can obtain our right,  
Wherein we join with you, without jot or jar.

This remember I you of to scrape out quite  
 All doubts of our truth in judgment of heads  
 light.

For this case, or like case in case, uséd thus,  
 Showeth mistrust in no wight any case to dis-  
 cuss.

And now we twain to satisfy (as we can)  
 Ourselves, and to see you the rest satisfied,  
 Allege brother fly, what ye can herein scan.  
 Whereto, mine answer shall forthwith be ap-  
 plied,

[tried.]

Th'ant's life or death in our judgments to see  
 That shall (quoth the other fly) without delay  
 Come in ure as briefly as it fully may.

Th'ant (in his chargéd tale) to spiders told erst,  
 Grounded thus—ere ought begin, have eye to  
 th'end.

[pierced.]

At end of th'ant's talk, spiders' hearts it so  
 That it staggered and 'stonished all that whole  
 bend.

[extend.]

Weapons fallen to ground, this out cry they  
 Shaking of their heads and casting up their  
 eyes,

[flies !]

Take peace with the flies ! take peace with the

[Dd.iii.r.]

Th'ant made spiders of flies as much afraid  
 though,

As he made flies of spiders, in tale erst told.

I grant (quoth th'other fly) indeed he did so,

Whereto you must grant that that fear did not  
 hold,

[bold.]

For spiders (forthwith) were again brag and  
 Though they so were (quoth he) th'ant per-  
 formed covenant.

[grant.]

That (quoth th'other fly) for true I cannot

There is (in th'ant's covenant) further meaning  
meant

Than the very words therein fully express ;  
To bring spiders in fear of flies by bond bent,  
Is not all that all flies look for in success :  
But to bring and keep them in that fearfulness,  
Bringing them in fear, not keeping them in  
fear,  
As fruitful to flies as paring of a pear.

To answer this quidity (quoth th'other fly)  
You can have no more of the fox but the skin ;  
The ant hath done all that he can possibly  
To bring spiders in fear and keep them therein.  
Whose good will not wanting, though power  
cannot win [ill,

Thing that good will would win, yet is it not  
Rather than blame lack of power, to thank good  
will.

Put case (quoth th'other) th'ant oweth you forty  
pound,  
Bound in obligation, to pay at a day ;  
At which day, he cometh to you (as he is bound)  
And where he should bring power forty pound  
to pay,  
He bringeth good will, and will pay you when  
he may.  
Whether would ye more, (in this case of your)  
Accept th'ant's good will, or blame th'ant's lack  
of power ?

[Dd.iii.v.]

What I would do (quoth the other) I know not,  
But what I should do, that right well I know.  
Th'ant showing full good will to pay me that,

And that lack of power without his fault did grow,  
 I should in troubling th'ant in conscience show  
 A rigor. Yea, (quoth th'other fly) but in law  
 To what end would th'ant's good will without  
 power draw?

In this case (quoth he) common law condemneth  
 th'ant,  
 In that the words of the bond are fulfilled no  
 whit, [want;  
 Performance whereof, in th'ant's case, hath no  
 Which may appear to flies of most simple wit,  
 In marking these words of this covenant here  
 knit, [fear  
 Th'ant (pain of death) shall bring spiders in like  
 Of flies, as he brought flies of spiders here ere.

These are (in th'ant's covenant) the words in  
 effect [bring,  
 Which bind the ant the spiders in fear to  
 But to keep them in fear no word runneth  
 direct;  
 And common law commonly in everything  
 Construeth words in their common plain sense  
 lying,  
 And that th'ant made spiders afraid, ye do  
 grant;  
 Ergo, th'ant (by common law) hath kept coven-  
 ant.

Now to bring this case in court of conscience,  
 Declaring our meaning in these words to be  
 That th'ant should keep spiders in fearful sus-  
 pense,

Th'ant answering to this that never meant he  
 To be bound to that inconvenient decree,  
 The judge (in this case and place) must needs  
 assent [judgment.]

With th'ant's meaning (against ours) to give  
 [Dd. iv. r.]

†§† In law, conscience, and reason, as thinketh  
 me.

The desert of this ant doth his pardon crave,  
 Lands, goods, bag, baggage, life, and liberty.  
 Friends (quoth th'other fly) I have a soul to  
 save,

Whereupon I protest I no malice have,  
 To th'ant, but in reason I think he should die.  
 This said, those flies to their place again did fly.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 44 is here given in the original.*]

¶At end of this last argument, the captain asking the ant what he can say why he should not die, the ant, after a few words, submitteth him to their order. Whereupon the captain going to the question, the ant is condemned by the voice of the most number. The captain then willing him to make his last prayers, he doth so.

Cap. 62.

[*The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.*]

**T**HE captain (to this) asked th'ant, How sayest thou?

What hast thou to say, why thou shouldst not die here?

The talk (quoth he) for me, by the fly had now,  
In reason, law, and conscience, doth me clear,  
Whose which tale doth much more pithily appear

For myself than if myself had told it,  
And as he told it, I pray all to hold it.

Wherein as I have kept covenant at the full,  
So crave I of you to keep covenant with me.  
Here stand I, to live or die now, as ye will.  
But in killing me (a poor ant) what win ye?  
Or what lose I? neither profit nor honesty.  
Honest death, in honest fame, shall persevere;  
Unhonest life, unhonest shame shall have ever.

Then said the captain : Friends, though I now  
at will,

Only by virtue of mine authority,  
Might give judgment here this ant to save or  
spill,

Yet will I not give it, but grant to agree,  
To see this case decreed by common decree;  
Which shall be tried, by these two words,—yea  
and no;

And straight to the question herein let us go.

All you that will have the ant live, say yea.  
 Yea, yea (with a loud voice), cried a great number though.  
 Now (quoth the captain) on th'other side let's see;  
 All that will not have the ant to live, say no.  
 No, no: cried out many, and showed many more [captain,  
 Than were on th'other part. Then said the Ant, of thine own death thou hearest here judgment plain.

I commit me (quoth th'ant) to the great God's will. [die.]  
 Say thy prayers (quoth the captain) ere thou On the ladder, down on knees half dead he fell, Forthwith saying his devotion devoutly.  
 In which while, two flies together wonderingly, Thinking th'ant to be wrongfully cast away, In talk between themselves, as followeth did say.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in original.*]

*¶While the ant saith his prayers on the ladder, two flies, thinking him to be wrongfully cast away, pitying the case, they touch (in talk) three sorts of flies seen there then. Wherein is touched some part of the properties of neuter flies.*

Cap. 63.

[*The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.*]

**O**H, friend (quoth the t'one fly), what a chance is this?

An innocent ant among flies to be cast!

The deed indeed (quoth th'other) damnable is;  
I thought sure we should with th'ant's life have passed.

For where forty flies irefully on th'ant frowned fast, [would save;

Three score piteously looked as they th'ant And yet th'ant cast by voice, great wonder I have.

To the two sorts that ye speak of (quoth the t'other) [to kill,

Th'one sort given to save th'ant, th'other th'ant A third sort indifferent to th'one part or th'other [all ill;

Did here (and do elsewhere) most part of Whose mischievous manners partly show I will, Coming (commonly) in practised exercise, Both among spiders, and also among flies.

These indifferents (or neuters) that part most take

That strongest is, or strongest like to be; And which side they lean to, such number they make [we see

That they bear the bell away, and most apt To cleave to the ill part, even of property.

Which property proveth (in sorts last or first), That of all sorts this last said sort is worst.

And yet oft esteemed with the best. For why?  
They fashion themselves to follow evermore  
Those that be (or like to be) I say, the most  
high,

But to all, late aloft, now laid on low shore  
To whom they have made curtsey most low  
before,

They either see them not, or overlook them;  
If chance once imbase them, they may not  
brook them.

Two buckets in a well, th'one up and th'other  
down, [brim;

They stand on the bucket that standeth on the  
Which bucket descending, they begin to  
frown.

The bucket ascending, midway they meet him,  
And bucket for bucket straight th'exchange  
made trim;

For among all buckets (take this a plain matter)  
They bide with no bucket that's driven to drink  
water.

They must have wine, with fare and cheer of the  
best,

Which, where and while it lasteth in any place,  
Who may show gratitude in semblance fairest  
Therein contend they to give gloss of good  
grace

To their viander, who may him most embrace.

Where they may win ought by fair dissimilate  
show,

There they flicker and flatter, in favour to grow.

But their entertainment once drawing to end,  
 They make none account of thanks from begin-  
     ning;  
 Th'end of their cheer, endeth the thanks of that  
     bend; [ning]  
 Straight from that place they are speedily spin-  
 To another host, good cheer good cheap win-  
     ning;  
 But to pay for board, wherever this flock  
     boards, [words.  
 Their current coin is low curtsey and fair

Which coin (to them) not costly, and yet so  
     scant,  
 That where and whensoever their cheer fail,  
 Then doth all curtsey and thanks for cheer had  
     want; [quail,  
 And not only good words in most of them  
 But some of the worst sort, that are given to  
     rail,  
 To turn recompense on the wrong side or shore,  
 Give ill words for good deeds of friends had  
     before.

These foelike friends, otherwise friendlike foes,  
 Are much like mermaids, th'one half flesh,  
     th'other fish;  
 On all texts, for all sides, they do give such  
     gloss [wish;  
 As may seem to serve all sides, as wit would  
 By which dissimulation, double devilish,  
 They wind in and out, here and there, to and  
     fro;  
 As the reed with the wind, every way they go.

And like as we see the oak, in stout storm of wind,

Standing stiff against the wind, overthrown,  
And the reed, waving with the wind, still we find

Saving itself, in all our blasts of wind blown;  
So in spiders and flies like lot oft-times grown;  
True stiff standers against the wind overthrow,  
False flattering followers with the wind, stand  
and grow.

Of our open known friends, we may be sure;  
Of our open known foes, we may beware;  
But these unnatural neuters here in ure,  
Neither sure of, nor 'ware of, any wights are;  
Either flattering lies they subtly declare,  
Or when they say true (if ever they say true).  
That say they for false or ill purpose t'ensue.

They are friends to no man, but in respect  
Themselves to take good or to avoid harm,  
Or to do harm of revenging effect;  
They will attempt, by corruption, to charm  
Those under whose wings they may sit close  
and warm

To cool and control such as make any show  
To bend any way from the bent of their bow.

To regard aright, a dog hath devotion  
As much as they; but be it right or wrong,  
For love, hate, dread, or meed, in promotion,  
If it serve their turn to make the wrong part  
strong,

That part will they sing in all their sung song,  
As these indifferent neuter flies have done here,  
Whose wrongful cleaving to the wrong, killeth  
th'ant clear.

This (quoth th'other) your saying hath made me  
see

Wherein I pray to the great God heartily,  
Be we spiders, be we flies, whatever we be,  
That we all may (by His grace) cut off clearly  
All unkindness of neuterlike indifference.

Th'ant now at point from the ladder to be  
rolled,

A fly, far off flinging toward them, cried, Hold,  
hold !



*The ant having now made his prayers, being  
at point to be turned from the ladder, a fly, afar  
off, crieth Hold ! Who (lighting in the tree)  
bringeth such a message from the head spider  
as the ant (thereby) is reprieved, and carried to  
prison.*

Cap. 64.

[*The plate as on p. 226 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.*]

**U**PON lighting in the tree, this said this fly :  
Being in scout-watch, a spider spying me,  
In the head spider's name willed me speedily  
To tell this to you all : if so be that ye  
Put this ant to death by currish cruelty,  
He protesteth that his prisoner fly's head  
Shall stand on a stake before th'ant be all  
dead.

The spider's favour to th'ant made some flies  
doubt [thought]

How it came to pass, whether the spider then  
In fearing spiders before th'ant's tale so stout,  
Was more to save his life, among flies then  
caught

Than to fear spiders, for which the flies th'ant  
brought,

And that the taunts that the spider th'ant gave,  
Were to cloak mistrust that flies to th'ant  
might have.

Or that the spider's wife, pitying th'ant's case,  
Obtained it by suit, or that the spider would  
Use the occasion, offered there then in place,  
To rid the fly by that colour, and not hold  
His bond by promise made to the fly, erst told ;  
Which was,—to charge and discharge him of  
offence, [science.]

As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-  
With this, a formal fly into the tree flew,  
Beginning thus : Friends, wise flies say (and  
have said)

Of two inconveniences, the worst eschew.

The worst of which two here, aside to be laid,  
 The best of these two is here first to be  
     weighed,  
 To save this poor ant, to save that poor fly,  
 Or to slay th'ant, and both ant and fly slain  
     thereby.

[Ee.i.r.]

Considerations herein are so great,  
 And so many, and most of such weight,  
 That they are in counsel more meet to treat,  
 Than to make an alebench talk of, to be bait  
 For babbling tongues to babble on, wherefore  
     straight

Mine advice is that six or eight flies most wise,  
 Closely consult here, the best way to devise.

Nay, nay (cried a thousand); we will none of  
     that,  
 We will be of counsel all. Yea, will? quoth he;  
 That kind of counsel is more meet to halloo at  
 Than to talk in, for if all of counsel be,  
 Ye can in that counsel have no secrecy;  
 But (in counsel) where secrets lacketh any,  
 There is (ant least) one councillor too many.

We refuse that way, cried the gross flies again,  
 Lest great wise flies buy and sell foolish flies  
     small.

If ye (quoth he) take to counsel all this train,  
 Then, naught being secret, all your enemies  
     shall

Be of your counsel, and buy and sell you all;  
 But since ye will have counsel cried at the cross,  
 I will disclose that I would have had kept close.

The fly in cobweb with the spider detained,  
We know what he is, we need not here to  
boast him. [gained?]

To kill th'ant, and have that fly killed, what is  
That shall all flies feel after we have lost him.  
But since the spider in such sort will host him,  
As we host the ant, our best way doth appear  
To keep th'ant (as gage for gage) prisoner here.

[Ee.i.v.]

For though th'ant (truth being told before his  
face)

Be far too base that fine fly to counterpoise,  
Yet if the spider esteem th'ant in like case  
Above the fly, as we him above th'ant prize,  
Then for delivery of both (without stays)  
The spider will (in exchange) change as gladly  
The fly for th'ant, as we will th'ant for the fly.

Briefly, the best way is here (in my mind)  
To keep th'ant prisoner in stocks fettered fast,  
Under guard of certain flies, to be assigned,  
Till we see somewhat of this war further past.  
And if we see cause, we may kill him at last,  
Or change him for some fly that spiders may  
take. [make.]

To this mine advice show yours, an end to  
At this, much bumbling among them all there  
was,

Many words, little matter, and to no purpose;  
Number of sentences here I may let pass,  
As things not worth the hearing here to dis-  
close. [prose]

And pass they must, for neither in rhyme nor  
I can win memory well to write with pen  
The tenth sentence given there, against th'ant  
then.

And though memory might the number have contained,  
 Yet was all confused so, in such bibble babble,  
 All alike lowed, and all too loud, in voice constrained,  
 That all parts of best wit had been unable  
 To catch, keep, and make, th'account explicable  
 Of all sayings there said. Wherefore (as I say)  
 Not only they may, but they must, pass away.

[Ee.ii.r.]

But finally, all their chat chatted, anon  
 To the fly's last tale they all did so agree,  
 That th'ant (guarded) went to prison. Whereupon [decree,  
 Quoth the captain: Since this is passed by  
 Being one point of two erst moved by me,  
 To be moved to you, in th'other point now  
 Conceive, and receive the thing I shall show  
 you.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 72 is here given in original.*]

¶*The captain fly inveigheth upon matter before passed, in such sort so encouraging the flies again, that anon they all crying to the captain to march forward, they bravely set forth. And laying their ordnance to the cobweb castle, they besiege it round.*

Cap. 65.

[*The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.*]

THIS thing I mean which brought spiders  
in fear;

Th'ant moved all the spiders to cast their eyes  
Upon us their enemies, whose show of strength  
there

Showed so puissant (by huge number of us  
flies), [terprise.

That they (much by that sight) gave up th'en-  
Whereon the spider three inventions inveighed,  
Reviving the spirits of the spiders in aid.

First, the spider to this willed the spiders all  
To cast eye from our force, and behold their  
own,

Which sight, such strength (he said) to their  
hearts must call,

That a heartless hearted spider should be  
grown

Hardy to fight, till we flies be overthrown.

Hazel-wands in their hands to halberts in ours  
He matched to over match us in our most  
powers.

Secondly, he bade them think that we do dread  
The sight of them, as much as they do fear us;  
Thirdly, to set cock on hoop and run on head,  
Their right seen (saith he) to fight in to death  
thus,

The most coward will fight and by his discuss,  
Straight to bliss go they, straight to bale go  
we. [three.

But hear me part the stake in these cases

First, we them beholding and they us viewing,  
 The fear falleth indifferently on either side;  
 Next, each side viewing itself hath ensuing  
 Of like courage to both sides to be applied;  
 Thirdly, he labouring right by fight to be tried,  
 With clear conscience on their side; let that be  
 weighed

Upon this my next saying, when I have said.

[Ee.ii.r.]

The spider to th'ant in this told tale erst said,  
 Laid to us flies rebellion, he laying  
 Example of plagues passed, where flies dis-  
 obeyed [obeying,  
 The great God's commandment, which dis-  
 Hath plagued such flies, according to his say-  
 ing.  
 Upon his which saying, hear me somewhat say,  
 How case of rebellion from our case doth  
 weigh.

All subjects in violent variance grown,  
 Against the high powers, they by that great  
 God placed,  
 His work hath showed his will, to bring over-  
 thrown, [braced  
 Suffer, and not resist, that must be here em-  
 And fulfilled, or else as such flies, in time past,  
 Have been scourged for resisting, so shall we,  
 And so to be scourged well worthy we be.

But perceive these high powers must take high  
 place  
 As standeth with law of the great God right-  
 fully,  
 For otherwise it falsifieth in this case

Their said defence at God's hand ; and contrary  
 Where extort power usurpeth place wrongfully,  
 The God doth right oft, in such usurpation,  
 Put miraculous power to th'extirpation.

Oft making th'instruments of the overthrow  
 As far to compare under the overthrown  
 As flies under spiders in comparison show ;  
 And how this spider hath usurpedly grown  
 To potentate state, that is to us unknown ;  
 I never heard fly yet that ever could tell  
 Ground of title, why his state should thus excel.

[Ee.ii.v.]

And he an usurper, as I think he is,  
 You thinking so too, can we think that he,  
 Breaking the God's law (as he doth doing this)  
 Shall in th'ill deed by good God defended be,  
 Whom he and his offend, offending his decree ?  
 Nay, hazel-wands in our hands the God's power  
 leads,  
 To beat back their halberts, to break their own  
 heads.

And where he allegeth that the spiders' right  
 Is a safe warrant with safe conscience to die,  
 For all such spiders as shall die in that fight,  
 And that flies dying therein die damnably,  
 That loud lusty lie for a lie warrant I.  
 With safe conscience (in this case) courage  
 arise,—  
 To bale go all spiders, to bliss go all flies.

The flies, upon hearing and doing of this,  
 All stert up and stood up most courageously ;  
 With one voice all cried : Sir captain, our mind  
 is

To give 'sault to the cobweb even by and by.  
 Wherewith, much more wilfully than wittily  
 (And yet not witless) into array they got,  
 Marching toward the cobweb, within gun shot.

The watch-tower struck alarum, th'enemies  
 descrying;

The gunners gave fire; and first at random they  
 Shot off, the gunstones among the flies flying,  
 Which galled the flies cursedly coming on the  
 way. [may,

But forth flying the flies now, as fast as they  
 Without trenching or such defensive forestalls,  
 Ordnance they lay, to batter that castle walls.

[Ee.iii.1.]  
 ¶ Great shot and grievous slaughter of flies  
 there was

Ere they could any piece of the walls batter,  
 To make it 'saultable; but so came to pass  
 That, in short time, that wall they did so  
 shatter

That their way lay plain, and straight to the  
 matter

(For which they came), they went to such a  
 fierce fight

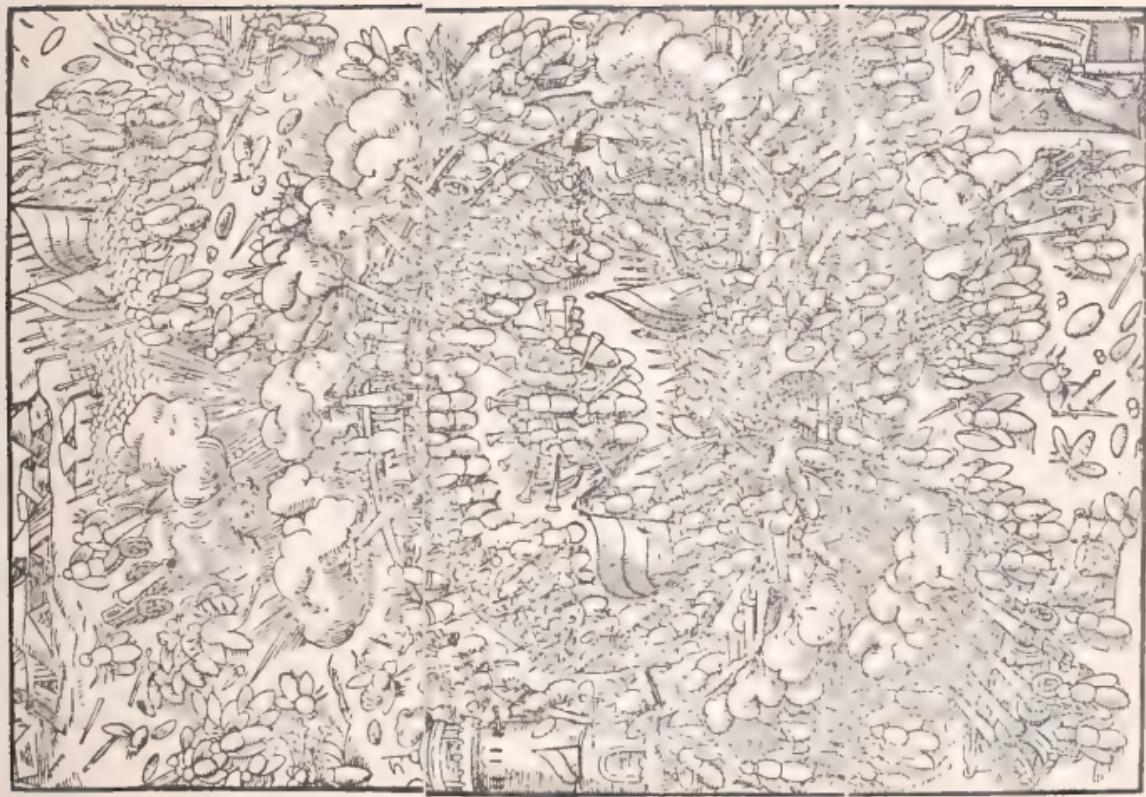
As never fought spiders and flies in man's  
 sight.

[The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in  
 original.]

¶ The flies give onset in assault upon the castle,  
 the spiders defending it in furious fight. And,  
 upon the slaughter on both sides, the flies re-  
 tire to their camp, the spider's wife and chil-  
 dren, on knees to him, beseeching him to take  
 peace with the flies. Cap. 66.

[To face page 288.





[Fig. 54. - Page 288.]

**I**N all battered breaks flies, raging in a rank,  
 Fiercely flew in, all black as the cloudy sky,  
 Spiders defending them; spider nor fly shrank,  
 Hundreds striking with guns in pieces twenty;  
 There a leg, here an arm, there a head doth fly;  
 And piece from piece, by violence flown round,  
 A flight shoot asunder, and as far from ground.

Both sides to see—so busily occupied  
 With pole-axes, partisans, halberts, bills, guns,  
 Trumpets on both sides, each t'encourage their  
 side—

The annoyance of the noise through my head  
 runs. [sons,—]

The sonless flies' fathers, the fatherless flies'  
 With this thing, above all thing, (alack!  
 alack!)

Oh what woeful widow flies go now in black!

Three-quarters of an hour this fight endured;  
 Which time, I imagined doom's-day present,  
 And that all the damned souls had been pro-  
 cured [bent,

To come with the devil thither, in his band  
 There to set up hell, to suffer their torment.  
 For, during the time, I think no worldly sight  
 More like hell than was sight of that helly fight.

Terror whereof was, to be witnessed well,  
 To see so many, alive so late, now dead;  
 Thousands setting on that cobweb (with heart  
 fell) [head;

Hang now there (like herrings in nets) by the  
 And spiders for their part, nor scotfree led,  
 Here some, and there some, snatched up amid  
 the rout

That were, within half an hour afore, full stout.



**I**N all battered breaks flies, raging in a rank,  
 Fiercely flew in, all black as the cloudy sky,  
 Spiders defending them; spider nor fly shrank,  
 Hundreds striking with guns in pieces twenty;  
 There a leg, here an arm, there a head doth fly;  
 And piece from piece, by violence flown round,  
 A flight shoot asunder, and as far from ground.

Both sides to see—so busily occupied  
 With pole-axes, partisans, halberts, bills, guns,  
 Trumpets on both sides, each t'encourage their  
 side—

The annoyance of the noise through my head  
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 And spiders for their part, nor scotfree led,  
 Here some, and there some, snatched up amid  
 the rout

That were, within half an hour afore, full stout.

[¶—qq.

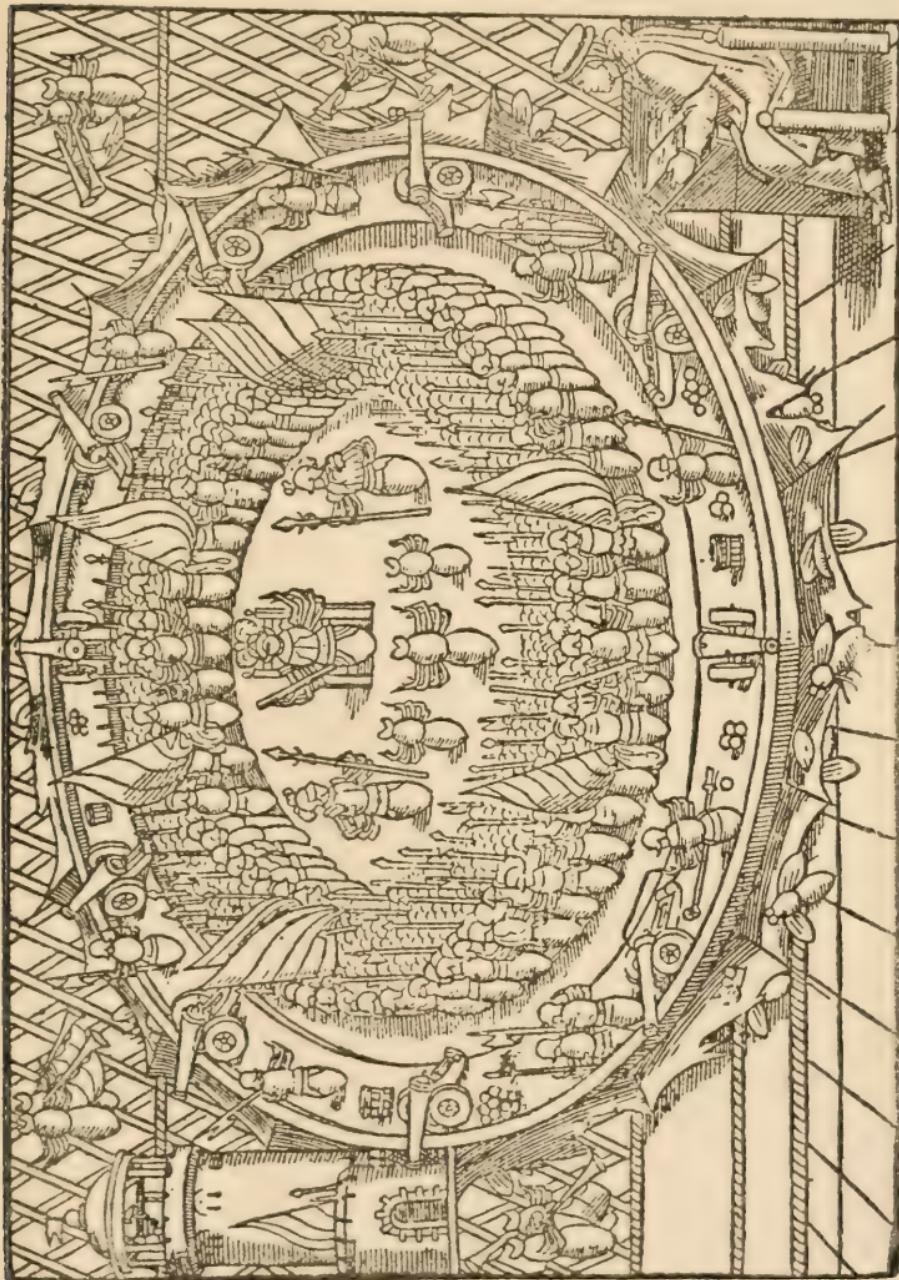
At end of this fray, no part saw cause to boast,—  
 Five thousand flies and five hundred spiders slain;  
 Wherewith the flies, seeing so many flies lost,  
 And of their purpose could yet no part obtain,  
 At retreat of trumpet, they retired amain  
 Where they before had camped, there to take a breath,  
 To save their honesty, and keep them from death.

The spiders were as glad to see the flies' backs  
 As flies were to show them, for what time they,  
 (Beholding dead spiders) each seeth his friend  
 lacks,  
 Few spiders (or none) saw cause to joy that day.  
 The spider's wife and children, near dead in  
 fray,  
 On knees besought him, in way of petition,  
 With the flies to take peace, on some condition.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in original.*]

¶*The spider, having compassion on his wife and children as on himself, he saith that he will, with the advice of his council, in their suit do all that may be done for the best.* Cap. 67.

[The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original, preceding the following illustration.]



THE spider, in hearing of this their request,

Seeing them in such fear, as he saw them there,  
That sight and hearing may at first sight be guessed

In husband and fathers that any zeal bear  
To their dear wives and sweet babes, at eye and ear ; [sight and sound

The sight sheweth, and hearing soundeth such  
As may their zealous hearts to death well nigh wound.

What kind-hearted husband can see his kind wife,

In like careful case, without woe at his heart?

What natural father can see, for his life,

His natural children, in dread quake and start,  
Without his heart smarting in most smartful smart?

I think, ye think, none, and even so think I ;  
Marvel not, then, though the spider be touched nigh.

He tenderly tendereth his children and wife,  
Refusing to stand up when he bade them rise,  
Till he would grant them (his grace) to stint this strife.

His sight of fear in them and fury in flies,  
Added his more perplexity to devise  
To use pity to them, as nature drove him,  
And policy to flies, as reason gave him.

To this he said, My dear wife and sweet babes two,

Great were the thing by you of me desired  
That I could deny, in what I can do.

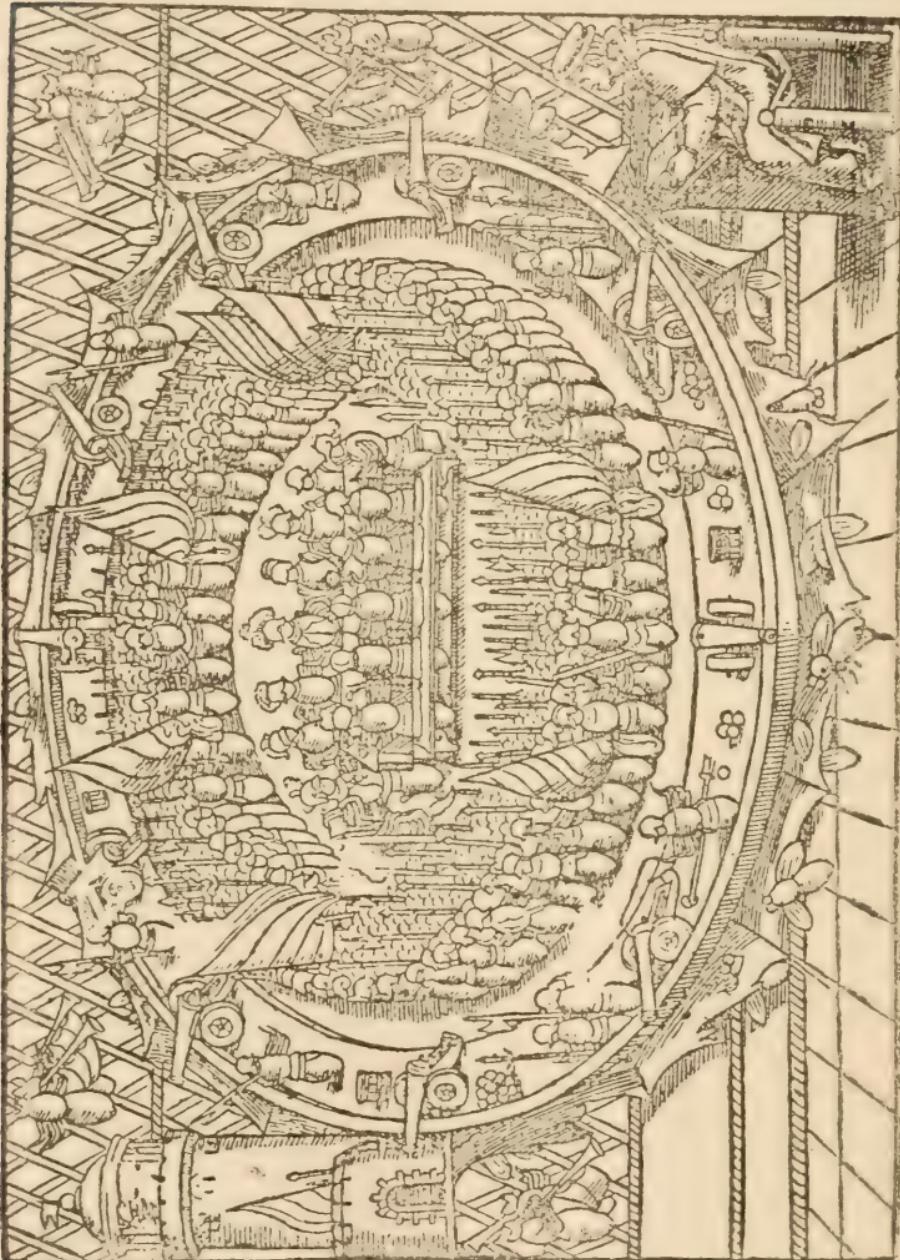
But for this treason, spitefully conspired,  
 And so put in ure by flies now retired,  
 Your suit therein, if I should grant out of  
 hand,  
 As the case standeth, I doubt how that grant  
 should stand.

[¶.] This case, touching me and all spiders most  
 nigh, [scanned.]  
 In me and my council shall forthwith be  
 Go in and be cheerful, and fear not, but I  
 Will favour and further your suit as may stand  
 With most safety of us, and all our whole band.  
 They rose and made curtsey; forthwith where-  
 upon  
 (They and he weeping) they (from him) thence  
 are gone.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in original.*]

¶The spider, set with twelve of his council, de-  
 clareth his wives' and children's suit (adjoin-  
 ing thereunto considerations of his own) for  
 peace to be taken with the flies, requiring those  
 councillors (while he depart and return) to de-  
 termine what way he shall take. Cap. 68.

[*The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original, preceding the following illustration.*]



THE spider with his council to counsel gat;  
The flies, flocking together, as was then  
need,

In consultation, full busily sat,  
Each side for themselves, best way to see de-  
creed.

I gave ear to both sides, to hear them proceed,  
Stretching my memory to a double charge,  
To hold (upon hearing) both th'effects at large.

And first, what I gathered on the spiders' side  
That shall ye have, and then the talk of the  
flies.

The spiders at a board themselves did divide,  
Six on th'one, six on th'other side to devise  
(And beside, such matter as should there arise).  
The head spider, in a chair at the board's end,  
Entereth as followeth hereafter pend.

Dear friends, our present peril in words to  
dilate,

It in deed, in heart felt, and at eye here seen,  
Should show fully. Our case is now to debate  
Our best way to wind out of this danger clean,  
To stay our state, as before stayed hath been.  
Wherein between two things I doubtfully doubt,  
To which one I shall undoubtedly stand stout.

My wife and children, upon their knees all  
three, [show,

With dead hearts as death in their faces did  
As I love their lives humbly besought me  
By some means forthwith to peace with flies to  
grow. [throw

For should they (said they) see the like over-  
That they had seen between our enemies and us,  
Of their present deaths they felt feeling discuss.

[rr.  
This perplexeth me,—what one way to take of twain :

Nature provoketh me (in pitying those three)  
To take peace with the flies, to run amain.  
Reason provoketh me politicly to flee  
The show of desire in peace with flies to be.  
Which pity to use, and policy to refuse, [news.  
How cruel flies will cock with us, that's no  
Now, on th'other side, if I pity omit,  
Nought weighing my wife and offspring in this  
case,

But do bend upon policy every whit  
To outface the flies, to stand face to face,  
And these three (by dread) to die in the mean  
space, [have,  
Then am I double dead, th'one that they death  
T'other to see them die, whom myself might  
save.

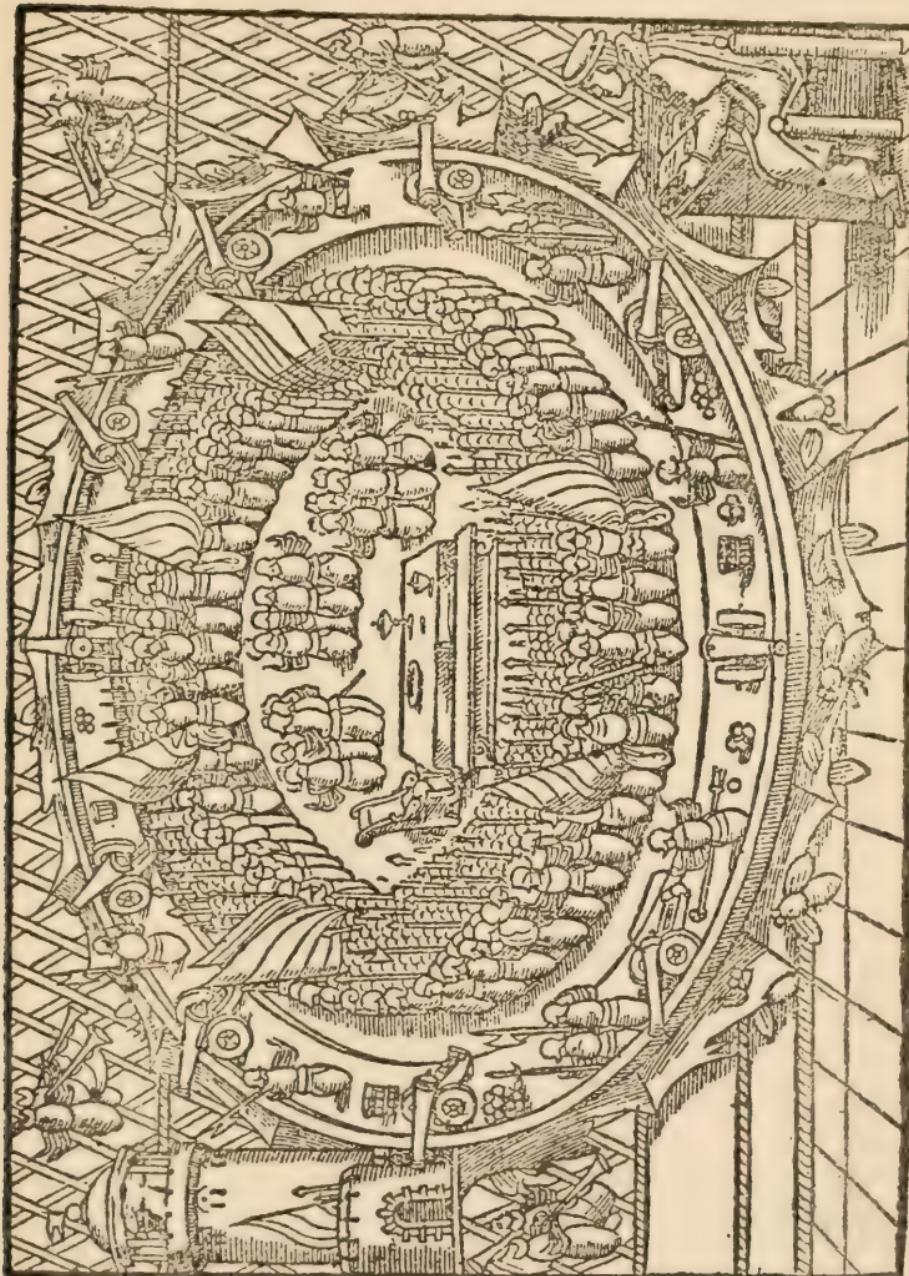
I pray this whole board this case first to re-  
volve,  
Each in himself, and then all together speak,  
Devising your best. Wherein while ye resolve,  
Your full minds to me (at my return) to break,  
I'll go to cheer my wife and babes, woe and  
weak. [ear

They prayed him to do so, which rang in mine  
That they were more glad to have him thence  
than there.

[The tail-piece as on p. 234 is here given in  
original.]

¶Straight as the spider is gone, the rest arise,  
withdrawing asunder in three plumps, four in  
a plump, no one knot knowing what the rest  
saith. Which done, they all sit down again  
against the spider's return. Cap. 69.

[The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original, preceding the following illustration.]



THE spider's back turned, straight these twelve arose  
 By four, four, and four, flocking into flocks three,  
 Every flock talking, and standing together close,  
 Each flock unto other (by ought I could see),  
 As strange and as loth that their talk heard should be [season]  
 As all could have been that that spider that Should have heard their talk, had they all talked reason.

All showed one manner, which showed them all meved,  
 Beating their fists, bending their brows, shaking their heads;  
 In fear and fury all were greatly grieved.  
 Talk of two of which three flocks whereto it leads,  
 I could not yet know, soft whispering, not far spreads. [near].  
 But talk of the third flock (standing somewhat Harkening somewhat to them, somewhat did I hear.

Friends (quoth one of those four), we four being one,  
 We may talk (and let us talk) frankly our minds.  
 This spider (our ringleader) to his flock gone, In debate of this case, to which he us binds, Is to me not unguessed how he with us winds. But first, not to teach, but to tell what he is, And then what he meaneth here, hear me say in this.

The spider is of wit, wondrous dark and deep,  
And double as double, as he is deep and dark.  
Lover where he loveth, laugh where he hateth  
to creep

To bottom of bosom, for to spy what spark,  
Kindled with or against him, he may there  
mark.

Much for which purpose he giveth us now a  
bone  
Of pity and policy to gnaw upon.

[Ee.iii.r.]  
But except we spice pity and policy both,  
As the seasoning may savour in taste, to stand  
As in his taste and savour savourly goeth,  
He will gnaw our bones out of taste out of  
hand.

Which ye shall see when I this scantling have  
scanned,  
Between his politicless pity (erst said)  
And his pitiless policy, (here erst laid)

This doubt, to bring out of doubt, he hath us  
set,

Whether (by pity) to save his babes and wife  
He shall seek to flies some peace of them to get,  
Or by policy to stand stiff still in strife,  
And lose both his babes, and also his wife's  
life.

First case, showing our danger in general,  
Last case, showing his danger in special.

This trap (not for mice) for spiders is baited  
To see what bit we bite or on what string we  
harp.

If his pity here be restrained or straighted,

And that (on his policy) our tongues do carp,  
More to save ourselves from danger of death  
sharp

Than to save him and his, we playing those  
parts [hearts.]

He will sure suspect that we have traitors'

And if we leave policy, and pity take,  
Concluding that we will bide all jeopardy  
Rather than see of him or his one finger ache,  
I'll hold a hundred pound to a halfpenny  
That he will take all that talk for flattery.

Though his eye on us thereat pleasantly pink,  
Yet will he think that we say not as we think.

[Ee.iii.v.]

These two two-edged cases take I for such,  
That they may be taken a two-edged sword ;  
Each side of both cutteth, wherever it touch.  
But when we shall resolve at yonder board,  
Leaving these two ways, I have devised a third.  
Wherewith, a tale he told them, so silently  
That (till he told it at board), no word heard I.

But in taking end, I heard him to them say :  
The spider will our minds severally know,  
And I, the youngest, shall speak first (no nay).  
And so each other following, sitting a-row.  
Wherein, as you in course to speak (after me)  
grow,

Say you : In this deep case, upon deep weigh-  
ing,

Ye have naught to say, but t'affirm my saying.

And so shall we (said he) save our four lives.  
They agreed. And to touch the second sort  
now,

Ancients to the first, one of them four contrives

To conclude, in matter what or manner how  
 From hearing I was yet kept (as I told you),  
 But the talker to that flock at end spake out  
 These words : This way shall save our four  
 lives, no doubt.

Of the third and most ancient flock likewise,  
 One at end of his talk these words aloud spake :  
 This way shall save our four lives. Or at least  
 size

Our honesties, and honest spiders undertake  
 Life much rather than honesty to forsake.  
 Ye say truth (said the three) and we three agree  
 With you to lose life, rather than honesty.

[Ee.iv.r.]

With this, they all at the board sat down  
 again,  
 That they (at the spider's return) might appear  
 Set as he left them, all as one to remain,  
 While he went to and came from his flock most  
 dear.  
 Who (so finding them), with sad and sober  
 cheer,  
 Sat down in his chair where he had sat erst,  
 And this process to his purpose promptly prest.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 272 is here given in  
 original.*] ]

The spider sat again with his council, in those  
 three said sorts arise three divers ways to take  
 herein. The best one whereof to choose, the  
 spider departeth to devise upon, willing them  
 to cause all corners of that castle to be cleansed  
 and all battered places made strong again.

Cap. 70.

[*The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 294 is here given in original.*]

[ss.]

**A**S I told you I would go, so have I gone  
To comfort my wife and mine in your  
names all,

Assuring them of your good hearts every one  
To pity and relieve their dread, as may fall  
In your most portable peril, come what come  
shall. [them so,  
Which hath (and naught else could) comforted  
That quiet they hark to hear, how th'end shall  
go.

Now, in case of pity and policy, erst laid,  
Touching the two doubts which I was, and  
am in,

I require fully to hear what ye have weighed;  
Wherein your sentences severally to win,  
You shall severally speak, and the youngest  
begin. [would],

Wherewith that youngest (as he erst said he  
In words next following here, his tale he told.

In these two cases, bolted, sifted, and fanned,  
To sue for peace in pity of you and your,  
Or (by policy) to war stiffly to stand,  
The doubts debated here, in most might of our,  
Require this demand, judged in my most power;  
Whether to take no peace, or what peace to  
take,

Labour wherein, I think vain, all that we make.

If I be worthy in your council to live,  
My counsel is that all your study shall be,  
Not what peace ye shall take, what peace ye  
will give,

The flies being afraid as much or more than we.  
Will not they seek for peace? yes, I warrant  
ye:

Trust not my wit, except ye have out of hand  
Flies suing to take peace, as your will shall  
stand.

Wherein what your will shall be ere the flies  
come, [wade,

Good is to dream to what point in peace to  
And not when they come to stand mute or mum,  
In lack of an answer (by you or yours made).

Needful haste in this case doth me full per-  
suade

From needless hasty device in th'other cases,  
Both which (this taking place) they take no  
places.

This (under your correction) is my full mind.  
And mine (quoth the second), and mine (quoth  
the third),

And mine (quoth the fourth). Quoth the fifth,  
I am inclined

Of another mind than this tale hath now stirred.  
For two causes; th'one, for that this toucheth  
no word

Of the case propound, which is our charge to  
touch;

Th'other, for that I have other matter  
t'avouch.

The pith of these two cases I take to consist  
 Whether (by pity your fearful flock to save)  
 We shall take peace with the flies as the flies  
 list,

To our common danger, by pride of flies brave ;  
 Or politicly show that we no peace will have  
 To fear flies, and save us, yours and you, in  
 By their fear of wars continual quarrel. [peril

I hold the best one way of these both to be,  
 To save your wife and children, your succes-  
 sion,  
 And thereby you. For, lacking you, what are  
 we ?

Who can (like you) save us from oppression ?  
 Our benefits (by you) enforce confession :  
 For notable governance in governors,  
 Never was felt our like governance to yours.

Your offspring so toward to rule after you,  
 As you rule before them to their erudition,  
 For our inestimable wealth now, and after now,  
 No spider hath the contrary suspicion :  
 But all spiders, in most humble submission,  
 Submit them whole to you so loved or dread,  
 As never was ruler that ever spiders had.

Our commodities won by you being huge,  
 Huge were our loss likewise by your being lost.  
 You and yours, appearing here our whole re-  
 fuge,

Pity or policy which shall be the post :  
 In this case to stick to my sentence bendeth  
 most, [rise,  
 Ere danger (by bread) to you or yours shall  
 To cleave here to pity, and take peace with  
 flies.

So say I (saith second) of that second sort.  
And we, said the third (and fourth) which said  
anon.

The first of most ancient four his report  
Beginneth, but first this tale last gone  
He seemeth to commend (in part); whereupon  
He sheweth his mind; but first (I say) in words  
fair,

He saith as followeth next, of this last sayer.

Said this said ancient spider : This tale told last  
Somewhat to touch (under pardon) I intend.  
The teller's mind I dispraise in no part past,  
But in sundry parts I can his mind command;  
Namely, in that his mind is bent to defend  
You and yours from the death, as he ought  
to do,

As far as duty duly draweth, and we too.

[*Ff.i.r.*  
But as these two doubtful dangers touch our  
state [low)

From top to toe, (as who say, high, mean, and  
So from brim to bottom them both to debate,  
In faithful plain manner, (as in heart may grow)  
All dark dissimulation to overthrow;  
Subtly sounding to sense depraved,  
That trace shall I tread, under pardon craved.

In these two tossed terms, pity and policy,  
To turn and toss recital, of this whole case,  
No need. After recital so sundrily,  
The terms but named, where memory is most  
base :

Remembrance of the whole, those terms bring  
to place. [yours,

Which pity is here applied, to save you and  
And policy here applied to save us and ours.

Beseeching you, and all you before I say,  
Till all my saying be said, judge therein no  
part.

But thoroughly hear me without stop or stay,  
And take in good part, my plain true meaning  
heart.

Good tales, ill taken may make the teller smart.  
But here, I pray hearing, and having ex-  
pressed,  
In following the effect, do as seemeth you best.

But first these two terms, pity and policy,  
(As I understand them) hear me them define.  
Pity is an effect of all clemency,  
That doth alway most clemently incline  
To have regard to remittable discipline;  
In matter of justice, or any case else,  
All unpleasant sufferance pity it expels.

[Ff.i.v.]

Policy is the thing that circumspectly weigheth.  
Wisely (and warily) to put things in ure;  
As reasons furthest fetch in foresight purvey-  
eth,

An overreach above the weak wit's cure;  
So to put things in ure, that they may endure,  
As no light blast of wind do overblow them,  
Nor lack of firm foundation overthrow them.

And policy, right taken (as I take it)  
In good part is taken, and construed ever.  
Policy is not as some spiders make it,  
Witty wretched wile, that doth all endeavour  
In wrongful ill to invent, to persevere.  
The name of policy there is to be last,  
And to be named falsehead, otherwise false  
craft.

Pity, wrong named, and wrong used also,  
 May be and hath been as where it is applied,  
 To help one or few, to the hurt of many more,  
 The pitied part being deep offenders tried,  
 Th'other part innocent. This (clear to decide)  
 Is either not pity, or peevish pity,  
 Which (as th'old saying saith) marreth the city.

But the right use of pity is (as I guess)  
 To pity part, as pity may pity all,  
 Without wrongful hurt any one to oppress.  
 This mean I in use of pity general :  
 But touching case (namely, yours) especial,  
 How it and such, from this general case  
 swerve,  
 Shall be touched anon, as my mean wit may  
 serve.

[Ff.ii.r.]

But policy and pity, pictured thus,  
 I take man and wife and temperance (as who  
 say)

Minister in this marriage I discuss,  
 Knitting this couple in steady stinted stay,  
 Policy to command, and pity to obey ;  
 Policy her husband, and pity his wife,  
 Politicly to keep all from pitiless strife.

Where policy may bring pity, promptly placed,  
 That husband will not keep that wife out of  
 place ;  
 And that wife (that husband's assent not pur-  
 chased) [grace]

Will not presume to take place, both to dis-  
 Her husband, and also herself to deface.  
 Thus policy and pity, in case general,  
 Join (for common wealth) in common governal.

But now, to grow toward speciality,  
 Where I laid misuse of pity before  
 To stand in not pitying generality,  
 By pitying the less number before the more,  
 Though that rule lean rightly to the right shore,  
 In case of pity, much misused generally,  
 It may (and doth) fail in some case specially.

Some three or four are in pity to be weighed  
 More than some other three or four thousand  
 are

In sundry cases, which policy doth aid.  
 Namely and properly now here to declare  
 In particular case of your present care,  
 To save us and ours, and lose you and yours,  
 Or lose you and yours, and save us and ours.

[Ff.ii.v.]

The loss of four thousand of mean spiders now,  
 Touching dangerous disturbance of the state,  
 Were less loss than were you four, and chiefly  
 you.

But the loss of the whole corps, of us to rate,  
 With loss of you four the most loss to debate.  
 This case to our case presently directed,  
 Is needless or bootless, to be respected.

Needless I take the talk, as in this respect.  
 First our case reacheth not determinately  
 To death of you, or us, but it doth direct  
 A dread of death in yours, and in you thereby,  
 Or danger of death in us; not death clearly,  
 But dread or danger of death, and death out-right,  
 Are oft (and now I hope) far distant in sight.

Yours in dread, and we in danger, of death  
 much, [whit,  
 All may be brought, and death yet follow no

Neither in yours, nor ours. And this case is such,

As if ye will therein policy admit  
To outface flies, the corps of spiders to knit  
In courageous countenance, then shall ye see,  
The flies in fear, and your fear needless to be.

As the talk is needless to compare the loss  
Of us all with you four, for none shall be lost;  
And otherwise, bootless, in this talk to toss,  
In matter on this side or that side to boast  
The most or least loss, for all, least and most,  
Shall die. If ye shrink and seek peace, flies  
will none.

Then we being first slain, you and yours are gone.

[Ff.iii.r.]

Will they slay us and save you, seeing this war  
Against you is chiefly or only begun?  
Nay, make ye sure ye are the principal bar,  
Or beam, in their eyes, as the quarrel doth run.  
Wherein I perceive no way ought to be won,  
But politicly t'encourage all our whole rout  
Afresh against the flies, in array to stand stout.

We in courage, out of courage the flies are,  
And we out of courage, in courage are they.  
We spiders pressing forward, back the flies  
bear; [stay.]

Spiders drawing back, forth press flies without  
Thus ye see policy here must make the way,  
If any way may be made, by possible powers,  
To preserve all, both you and yours, us and  
ours.

This under pardon of you and yours, erst  
prayed,  
Is both my conscience and my counsel plain.

And mine (quoth the next of the three) with  
him stayed.

And likewise ours also (quoth those other  
twain). [retain]

The spiders' outward words, showed show to  
All their sayings and all alike to like well.  
But how he liked inwardly, I could not tell.

But on these three divers tales a part to muse,  
Which one to take, or which to leave of all  
three,

He said he would (and did) depart to peruse.  
Willing them in meantime an order to see  
That castle in warlike case again to be.  
Whereupon he to his inner mansion gone,  
To the soldiers spiders they went anon.

[Ff.iii.v.]

To whom that most ancient spider repeated  
Such part hereof as was meet for them to hear.  
But first he invented in that he treated  
To encourage them all to be of good cheer,  
And pluck up their hearts, if flies again march  
near.

Matter of which rule such, and the tale so told,  
That it brought the spiders again brag and  
bold.

Then entereth he into repetition,  
Of commandment given for that sort renewing,  
For cleansing and strengthening in each con-  
dition,

As it was before former 'sault in viewing,  
The peril of a second 'sault eschewing;  
To lay down their weapons, and set to their  
hands [stands.]

To scour and to repair all there that in need

The whole number (saving reserved to watch  
The watch in the watch tower and upon the  
walls),

Lay by their weapons, each one his place to  
catch. [falls;

To strengthen weak places, each one to work  
Strongly they stop up all gun hole galls;  
All places spied in any kind of faulting  
Made strong in defence of a second 'saulting.

The dead spiders they buried in the castle close,  
The dead flies hanged out in gibbets openly.  
But to see the spiders, how they turn and toss,  
Some making of graves, some the spiders bury,  
Some making gibbets, some hanging flies on  
high,

Some spinning threads to repair that castle  
wall,—

I never saw the like, nor I think never shall.

[*Ff.i.r.*]

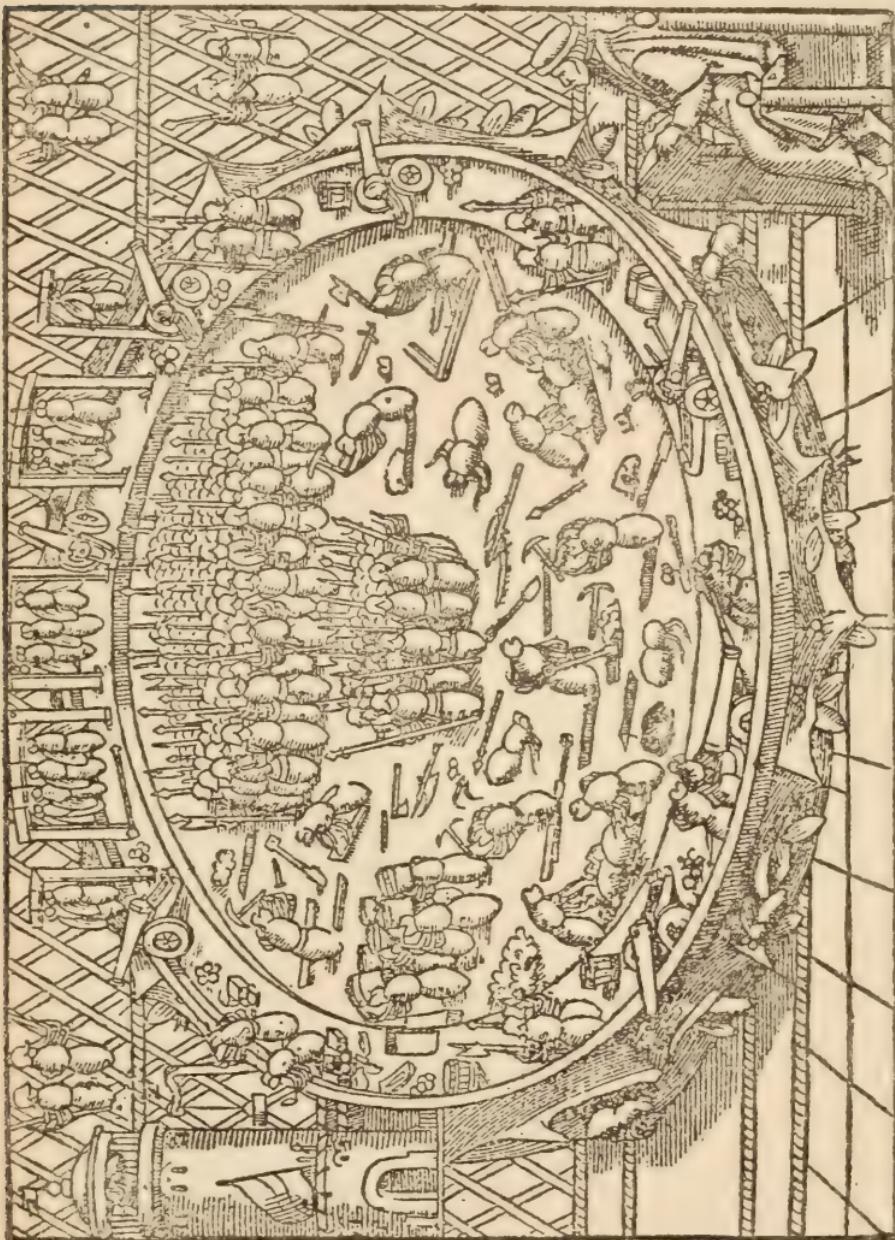
¶ Which, while they bring in pre-estate, now to  
hear

What the flies (in common counsel not private)  
Be in devising what way may best appear  
On their part, each party to save his own pate.  
They, being set in counsel it to debate  
In a troop beside the reformation tree,  
Th'order and th'end followeth here, to hear  
and see.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 272 is here given in  
original.*]

¶ The flies in camp be at counsel, desirously  
devising, by what mean to get peace best.  
Whereupon the captain inventing a mean to  
drive th'ant to sue for peace if they will be ruled  
by him, they thereunto agree. And thereupon  
the ant is brought before the flies. Cap. 71.

[*The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original, preceding the following illustration.*]



*In original this is placed at commencement of Cap. 72. It is absolutely accurate as to incident and outline, and is probably from a photograph. But it is a bad and faint impression as compared with original.*

THE flies discouraged (as erst disclosed),  
They all cried to take peace some manner  
of way.

A warfare to fare, that fare them disposed  
Rather to fast, and to fare full hard that day  
Than sharp 'saults, with sour sauce to taste  
more in say.

Their bumbling buzzing at their captain's cry  
ceased,  
This advised advice to them he expressed.

Friends all, that ye all would have peace, ye all  
show ;  
But what way to come to peace, none of you  
tell. [grow ;

Two plain ways there be, to provoke peace to  
One to submit us on knees to our foes fell ;  
Another, to offer them talk, war to expel,  
By taking peace under condition such,  
As may extinct (in both parties) all cause of  
gruch.

But first, if we submit us, all are undone ;  
Mean mercy, nay, main misery, shall be our  
end ;

Flies knees to furious spiders win no boon.  
The second, and the best way is, to extend  
Some talk as I told ; which if ye condescend  
To follow, we must enter talk in the same  
By some other bye mean than in our own name.

If we sue directly, spiders will be proud,  
And we either get no peace, or such a peace  
As between war and that peace small choice  
avowed.

Exactions, ransoms, or fines, shall never cease ;  
Bonds of good abearing shall no release ;

Flies' lands, flies' goods, flies' lives, and flies' liberty,  
Many clearly lost, and all in jeopardy.

But you following (as ye ought) my counsel,  
I will drive th'ant to make suit this suit to sue,  
By a tale told to him here, which I will tell,  
If ye will hear it and sooth it. The flies grew  
To agree. Wherewith certain flies for th'ant  
flew

Who fet and set at ladder foot by the flies,  
The captain (to th'ant) did this tale devise.



*The captain telleth the ant that the flies have retired from th'assault: (where many spiders are slain) to see whether the spiders will sue for peace, for which since they sue not, the flies will assault them again. But the ant they will hang straight before they go. Cap. 72.*

[*The plate as on p. 252 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 312 is here given in original.*]

**A**NT (plain and true, short and sharp), a tale of me,  
Told to thee, thou must hear. Thus standeth the case.

A great conflict (even now) the spiders and we,  
Have had, which slew spiders a piteous pace,  
Till pity wrought our retire, to see what grace  
Might appear in them to sue to us for peace,  
In giving us our right, this war to surcease.

And that they do us wrong intolerable,  
I durst make thee (their friend) our judge for my part;

The abomination is inscrutable,  
To pronounce at full, how they (by will per-vert) [smart,

Have wrongfully wrung us, to wrongs of most  
Which we have borne, and never thereon  
wroken, [broken.]

Till the burden our backs and necks hath

And when we hope (if we at any time hope)  
That our breakback burdens shall come to end,  
Then showeth th'increase of our burdens so  
large scope,

That they seem but begun, none end seen t'intend;

Wherein their force forceth us to band in bend.  
Rather than bide their perpetual shackling,  
To stand against them, and stick to our tack-  
ling.

As we have stuck now here (I say) to their  
    pain; [said]  
And to avoid their more pain (I say and  
Being loth to set abroach their blood again,  
We have trained a long time (indifferently  
    weighed)  
To keep them from th'extreme extremity  
    stayed,  
To see their suit for peace us to peace t'at-  
    tempt, [empt.  
Which, through their own fault, (we say) is ex-

¶.

But since they sue not, we will set on again,  
To leave no spider (or else no fly) alive.  
But ere we go we have made decree certain  
To hang thee straight, ant—it booteth not to  
    strive.  
Get a ghostly father that can shortly shrive;  
Dispatch, hangman; some fly go some bell to  
    toll,  
That spiders and flies may pray for th'ant's  
    soul.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here given in  
original.*]

¶The ant, upon sudden short warning of his  
death being much dismayed, laying all that he  
can for his life, and yet can get no grace, he  
prayeth respite while he be brought to the  
spider to see whether he will grow to any peace  
to save the ant's life. Which granted, the ant  
is brought before the spider. Cap. 73.

[*The plate as on p. 223 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 312 is here given in original.*]

NEVER was there ant (I ween) so astonished

As was this ant upon this chief fly's tale told;  
Had be been an ant plenteously moneyed  
He would have given sacks full of silver and gold

[to hold,

To have been safe thence, but he prayed them  
And hear him speak once again before he die.  
Which granted, this began the ant by and by.

Master Captain (and all my masters here flies)  
I beseech you consider, considerately,  
Not only that none enmity doth arise  
In me toward you, proved approbately,  
Before nor since my sufferance captivately;  
But friendship in advising you peace to keep,  
Where war hath since brought many flies in dead sleep.

Also to view I humbly you instant,  
What time ye have hanged me, what thing ye have won?

The carcass of a poor wretched silly ant  
Not worth the rope that it hangeth by in the sun.

[were spun

Weigh well (with yourselves) what a thread this  
An innocent by tyranny to death to draw,  
No fly thereby winner the worth of a straw.

Note more; this thing once done, can never be undone,

And till it be done, may be done when ye will;  
Which being now done, and repented as soon,

Too late cometh that repentance to avoid th'ill.  
 Mark more; if you in this fury me here kill,  
 Then the fair flower of flies (as ye take him)  
     dieth,    [lieth.  
 As from the spider, threatening therein erst  
 Quoth the captain, Turn the ladder! Th'ant  
     cried, Stay!

If all this aforesaid, my life will not save,  
 Hear this device, devised another way,  
 That is, it may like you I your grant to have  
 Of one poor petition, which I last here crave.  
 Let me go guarded to the spiders again,  
 To prove what peace I can for my life obtain.

Be it so, cried the flies, who made a herald go:  
 To make most humble suit in behalf of th'ant,  
 That he and (save forty flies with him, no mo')  
 Might be admitted to his speech that instant.  
 The spider (seeming to grant it, hard and  
     scant)

Bade him come. Wherewith away the herald  
     went,  
 Showing the flies and ant the spider's assent.

Forty flies guarding the ant flew forth bravely.  
 The spiders' fort, renewed and furnished  
     again,

The head spider in the midst standing gravely,  
 And (for terror) on gibbets and gallows remain,  
 Flies thousands hanging, some in rope, some in  
     chain.

Th'ant, being brought before the spider to  
     speak,    [break.  
 His mind (as followeth) forthwith he did  
 [The tail-piece as on p. 257 is here given in  
     original.]

**T**h'ant (in way of petition) suing to the spider  
for peace, laying considerations to provoke him  
the rather thereto, the spider doth attentively  
give the ant hearing.

Cap. 74.

[The plate as on p. 227 is here given in  
original.]

[The plate as on p. 253 is here given in  
original.]

**R**IIGHT excellent uncle, if I, woeful wretch,  
To call you mine uncle may here be so  
bold,

Two things to pronounce plainly without far  
fetch

Is my present purpose, first of which doth hold  
Thanks, for saving my life; second to be told,  
Standeth upon a request by petition  
For peril, like the first in condition.

As thus: of life I am in like danger now,  
As I was then (except your merciful aid)  
The flies being bent to live and die on you,  
To 'sault this castle afresh, they have purveyed,  
And had been here ere this, saving that they  
stayed

To hang me first, which hath no longer stay  
But till I of peace bring them word, yea or nay,

No whit at their suit, but altogether at mine,  
They respite my life till my return, to try  
What good luck your good love to me may  
assign

By inclination to peace charitably,  
At my suit, for my sake, both to save thereby  
My life, and as many of yours as shall,  
In this fierce force, be clapped in the necks  
withal.

And since your own estate ye can better weigh  
What way is best (for you and yours) than I  
can,  
And that ye know the worst peace (as wise  
wights say)  
Is better than is the best war to scan,  
As proof showeth partly here, since this war  
began,  
This considered, considering of your part here,  
I leave off to consider mine own part clear.

First beseeching you with me, and for me now  
To consider I am in this peril brought  
By myself, for myself? nay, by you for you,  
Without my seeking, by your own request  
wrought;  
And stinted reward, corruptly to be bought,  
None ye offered, none I asked, nor none I have,  
Nor none I sought, but your favour to vouch-  
safe.

Secondly, your case erst arbitrated  
I furthered (as far as my wit might force power)  
Which showed so, when I the same iterated,  
That I had words of thanks from the mouth of  
your.

Thirdly, where chance of war was to me so sour  
That I (for you) was captive and should have  
died,  
What (and how) things grew thereon, hear  
them specified.

At the flies' first approach toward this assault,  
To a tree they drew me, straight to hang me  
there,  
Asking of me, or laying to me, no fault,

But that I was your friend. In which deadly  
fear

One fly, erst at th'arbitrament (as other were)  
I prayed to speak, that I might speak ere I  
died,

Which was at last granted, but first long  
denied.

My tale there, stood on two intents in effect ;  
One, to save myself, another to save you  
And yours. And therein to 'scape unsuspect,  
First for myself, I laid that no fly could avow  
That ever I offended fly ere now or now ;  
Praying them (thereupon) to hear and adjudge  
me,

As might most equally stand with equity.

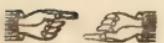
And for the safety of you, and of yours here,  
To qualify the fierce fury of the flies,  
All trembling terror that I could make appear,  
That might discourage the flies in any wise,  
That did I at the full to the flies' device ;  
Which wrought such effect and did their hearts  
so pall, [nigh all.  
That they cried for peace, and would have fled

But the chief fly staying them, then against me  
Spake his pleasure there, as you did after here ;  
He saw and said to the flies that they might see  
My counsel given them was against them clear,  
And that I put them in fear to come here mere  
Only for the love that I to spiders bear,  
And to set myself at liberty from flies' snare.

Whereupon he moved, and they did consent,  
That I should be sent hither as sent was I,  
To tell a tale, to abate your fury bent ;

Wherein if I brought you all as fearfully  
 To fear them as I had brought them formerly  
 To fear you, then should I be set frank and free,  
 Or else (at my return), hanged straight should  
 I be.

Here to prolong my life, nature provoked me,  
 To make you afraid of them, somewhat to say ;  
 But yet again to that affection yoked me  
 To reason so faintly, when that I did inveigh,  
 That you (by reason) straight wiped that fear  
 away ;  
 For which I was no sooner returned unearth,  
 Ere I had (at the flies' hands) judgment of  
 death.

 First at your request, for you, and not  
 for me,  
 I came, craving no reward but your good-will ;  
 Second, in th'arbitrate case I wrought decree  
 To the best for you, as far as I could skill ;  
 Thirdly, for your sake to death most vile or ill,  
 I was then drawn, and am now drawing again,  
 Except my grief some grace of you obtain.

That is, that it may like you to flies to grant  
 Peace, such as despair give no cause to refuse,  
 And pride give no cause it proudly to avaunt,  
 But as measurable mean measure endues,  
 So (of your grace) graciously them to use.  
 This love toward my life, please it you to show,  
 No reward else at your hands crave I to grow.

This ended, the ant made curtsey to the  
 ground, [bowed.  
 At which the spider gave him a beck, low  
 But before he any word to th'ant did sound,

He paused solemnly, as any spider could.  
Which done, very lovingly, but not very loud,  
In manner assured and in words right grave,  
First th'enter and then th'end of answer he  
gave.



*The spider (upon th'ant's tale told to him)  
allegeth certain things by which he seemeth in  
doubt much to grant peace to the flies.  
Wherein the ant and he traversing somewhat,  
anon he granteth peace to them under condi-  
tion expressed, wherewith th'ant is brought to  
the flies again.*

Cap. 75-

[*The plate as on p. 227 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 253 is here given in original.*]

**C**OUSIN ant, a long matter in short speech  
here,

Ye have (as ye can) right wisely declared.

Which, as ye grounded on three things to appear,

To draw me to pity you, in case thus snared,  
So, this mine answer to those three prepared  
Hath in it other three things, two of which  
three [with ye.

Stand sore-against ye and the third standeth

First, the harm (by wrong) that flies have done  
me;

Second, my will to be revenged on the same;

Third, the pity I have of you, I promise ye.

Of two things between these three, which one  
to name,

I can (as yet) no determination frame;

Which is, one of these two to determine at end,  
Whether to slay all my foes, or save one friend.

Nay, whether to slay or to save foes and friend  
both,

And whether to slay or save both you and  
yours. [goeth:

On this question (quoth th'ant) this case rightly  
But peace saveth them and theirs, us and ours.

War slayeth (or dangereth) all in short sharp  
showers.

Ye save all in pitying me, the least one;

Not pitying me, ye slay as seemeth every one.

But two of your three points last touched, hear  
me touch,  
Omitting the third, till I them have touched.  
Of your harm, your will to revenge, as ye  
avouch,  
To th'one ill past, th'other ill to come,  
couched :

When all is revolved, that can be avouched.  
Your revengement to come, of the flies' ill  
past, [cast.  
May bring you more harm and the flies away

[Gg.i.7.  
Yea, cast you and yours away too, I say it  
may : [plain,

And (under your pardon) to speak my mind  
Your desire of further revengement to weigh,  
Declareth much cruelty in you to remain.

The least fly's ransom hath been loss of his  
brain, [in sight,

That in time past hath touched here and now  
Thousands of flies slain, and hanged in present  
fight.

Thus for their ill, and your will th'ill to re-  
venge, [be.

Your pointing of those two points dispointed  
In that quarrel charity doth you challenge  
In deadly defiance of all enmity.

Then passing these two points, to this third  
pass we—

Pity, whereby charity here to embrace,  
Above all cases, pity this pitiful case.

And pity in you showed here now unto me,  
Commodity to yourself I think shall gain,  
If you (in this respect of pity) agree

To take peace with the flies, though ye loss sustain,  
 My life to save in recompense of my pain :  
 Hands and hearts of ants, old and young,  
     great and small,  
 To serve you in your need, ye are sure of all.

And contrariwise, if I here now go to wrack,  
 Where you shall me slay, in that ye may me save,  
 Not only friendship of all ants ye shall lack,  
 But all creatures living shall you deprave  
 And abhor where they speech or thought of  
     you have ;  
 Against you (in this case) least mite in a cheese,  
 In his most might will fight in blood to his knees.

[Gg.i.v.]

To this (all that I can say) what ye will do  
 I humbly beseech you forthwith to declare.  
 Life, or death, which one of two to trust unto,  
 Is my deep desire, that I may now prepare  
 My stomach ready, according to my fare ;  
 My mind, I mean, to die, or else to live,  
 As your pleasure is, my death or life to give.

Cousin ant (quoth the spider) pity toward **you**  
 And anger toward them, wrestleth in me sore.  
 The flies' spite to spiders, to show what and how  
 They have spited us from long before,  
 Laying their faults on our backs, and evermore,  
 By claiming our commons and such other like  
 Slanderizing our titles, quarrels still they pike.

Sir (quoth the ant) faults on both sides I have heard,  
 Which on both parts I wish to be mended,  
 The next way whereto, is peace to be preferred ;  
 By war, no part mended, all parts offended.  
 War wasteth all things ; where war is thus bended ;  
 In pity whereof, by peace all ills to mend,  
 Peace to all parts I wish still an end.

Well, cousin, chiefly, yea only for your sake,  
 In recompense of your pains at my desire,  
 Pardon I give flies, and peace thus shall they take—

I will all flies out of hand hence to retire,  
 And that they in tumult no further conspire,  
 But that they clear dissolve this conspiracy,  
 And every fly flee home, to live peaceably.

[Gg.ii.1.

†§† They shall now set you at liberty also,  
 Bag, and baggage, to go straight home frank  
 and free; [go,  
 And in this window and all, where my powers  
 Half the holes for theirs I grant to them from  
 me;  
 And the fly that this began, still here to be,  
 Standing upon his trial in consequence,  
 As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-  
 science.

Which (as I promised him), I will perform.  
 This is your end. And flies, warn your fellow  
 flies,  
 To beware henceforth of these deeds enorm,

And by their harm here present, to wax so wise  
That they never attempt more thus to rise  
Against their beggars or betters, such as be  
Placed thus above flies in authority.

Great God save you (quoth th'ant) quoth those  
flies Amen.

Low curtsey they made, and away they flew  
To the camp of flies, and there and then,  
Presenting th'ant to them, about th'ant they  
drew

With panting hearts, to perceive what would  
ensue.

Wherewith the ant, at curtsey, with knees low  
bowed,

These sweet words he began, in voice right

[loud.]



*¶Th'ant declaring peace, as it is granted, the  
flies in much joy set the ant thankfully at  
liberty, and home goeth he. Whereupon the  
captain commandeth all flies to draw near to  
hear him speak ere they depart. But they flee  
all away, a few except.* Cap. 76.

[*The plate as on p. 227 is here given in original.*]

[*The plate as on p. 253 is here given in original.*]

PEACE and pardon I bring now into your laps.

Upon these words spoken there was such a shrill shout,

Holding up their hands, casting up their caps,  
Such joying and rejoicing the whole camp about, [rout.]

As seldom hath been heard and seen, in such a Long was it ere silence would fully be won;  
But at last it was won, which done th'ant begun—

Peace to pronounce, in form as it was granted,  
And that it was granted only for his sake.

When he at end (to them) had it avaunted,  
And that he of his guard thither did witness take,

They all of the same affirmation did make.

Straightway the halter taken from the ant's neck,

The captain fly gave th'ant a lovely low beck.

Praying him to let all hard handling past, pass,  
And to consider that in number so great,  
All be not one fly's brood, and woe he was,  
That he had showed himself so ill, him t'en-treat,

Desiring him it to forgive and forget.

Sir, quoth th'ant, forgiven and forgotten all is,  
For my part, and ever shall be after this.

And such flies as erst had frowningly faced him,  
 Lovingly they then on him did smoothly smile.  
 The captain and chief flies, having embraced  
 him,

[style,

They giving him thanks, in words of pleasant  
 Discharging him thence, I let him pass a while;  
 Most jocund and joyfully homeward to flee,  
 While ye the flies' conclusion have by me.

The ant being gone, the captain forthwith  
 Made proclamation, to be heard there say.  
 But thousands (after hundreds) are gone even  
 since,

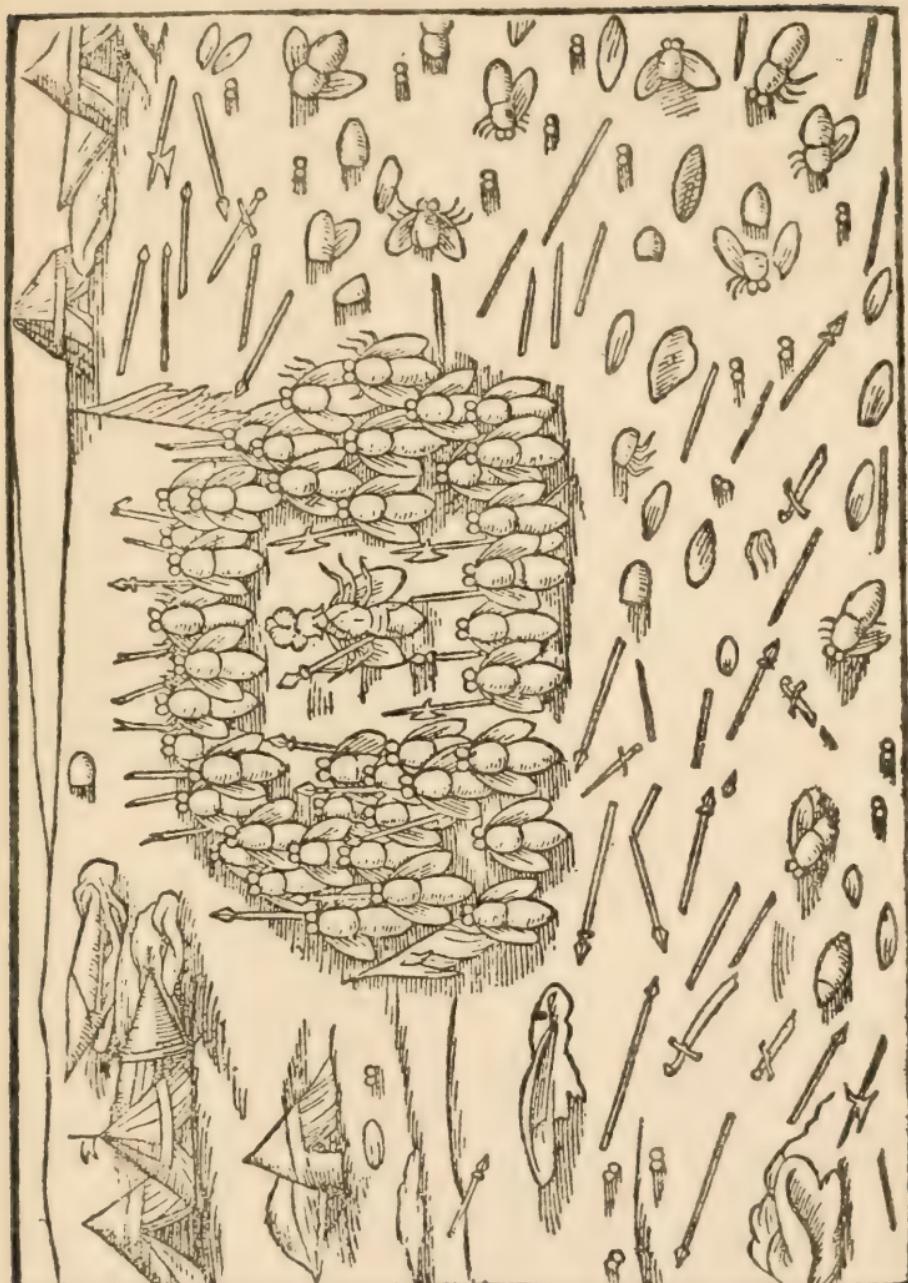
Till all within forty were flown quite away.  
 The rest, most against their will forced to this  
 fray,

Gathering about the captain to hear him speak,  
 He to them, and they to him, their minds did  
 break.

*[The tail-piece as on p. 72 is here given in  
 original.]*

Upon a little talk had between the captain and  
 the few flies there left, touching the rudeness  
 and lightness of the common sort of flies, mis-  
 liking their former light lewd demeanour, they  
 depart. The camps on both sides, clear broken  
 up.

Cap. 77.



[The plate as on p. 220 is here given in original.]

**H**OW like ye this rudeness of these flies  
(quoth he)?

As ill as any sight I have seen (quoth one).

Well (quoth another) it is no novelty :

Common sort of flies (in manner every one),

As gidds come and go, so flies come and are  
gone.

Oft times when strifes are (by wrangling flies)  
begun,

In the midst of the matter, away they run,

Leaving flies in the briars, whom they forced  
thereto,

As they forced me; but I am this time taught  
Against another time what I shall do.

And we (quoth other) thither forcibly wrought.

My mind (quoth the captain) was to have  
brought

Our camp in order dissolved. Sir (quoth one)  
Ye know they that know none order, can keep  
none.

I told at first (those flies that forced me out)  
Though I took (as I took and take) our claim  
right,

Yet against our superiors to be stout.

To attain our right by force of furious fight,

A blind fly might see that out of the way quite.

Which would not be heard, but ere I again stir,

As I now stirred, I'll be hanged at mine own  
door.

And we (quoth the rest). Friends (quoth the  
captain)

I was not forced at beginning to come forth;  
I rather forced other. But to be plain,

The gain in this journey seen, what it is worth,  
And what danger this and like enterprise  
stoorth,

I'll not stir thus again, if I may sit still;  
And forced to stir thus, I'll stir with an ill will.

[*Gg. ii. r.*]

Better smooth words to give than smart stripes  
to take,

Namely, where stripes win nought and words  
may win all;

Against the stream, strife again I will not make,  
But take at spiders' hands, as in peace may fall;  
I see what it is to spurn against the wall.

Home will I in peace, and in peace abide there,  
Wishing peace th'instrument right to try each  
where.

We wish the same (said the rest) all taking  
flight

[place.]

From thence; nothing there left but th'empty  
Whereupon the spider break up his camp quite.  
Which done, I started up a speedy pace,  
Looking out at the window, there to purchase  
A sight (if I could) of the ant come home new,  
What solemn salutations should there ensue.



[Gg.ii.v.]

¶ Th'ant being come to his molehill, solemnly received of his wife and children, and a great number of ants, he telleth to them all a tale discoursing th'effect of all his trouble had among the spiders and flies, willing them diligently to mark what he sayeth. Cap. 78.



[Gg.iii.r.]

OUT at a lattice hole casting mine eye,  
A molehill I spied, as the emerald green,  
The grass low laid, and, unto the window nigh,

Th'ant new entering the same, who, when he  
was seen,

On so sudden warning, never was (I ween)  
Such a number of ants as were on that hill,  
To show outward tokens of inward goodwill.

At th'ant's first entry, a lane of ants was made,  
Every ant by the way shaking that ant's fist;  
And somewhat more than the midway of that  
glade,

His wife met him, whom he full sweetly kissed;  
His babes fell on knees, whom he devoutly  
blessed.

Whereupon, all ants having that ant embraced,  
These words said he to them, amid 'mong them  
passed.

Dear kinsfolks, and allies many, and friends all,  
What ye have heard of me since I from you  
went, [shall

That know I not. But myself here report  
Of my troublous tragedy th'effect fervent.

In telling which tale, mine effectual intent  
Is that ye all shall now mark much what I say,  
And all mark much more why I say that I say.

But what I say mark first. I think ye know all  
That my young cousin spider was with me here,  
To come to his father, my uncle, at call,  
But the cause wherefore he willed me to appear,  
Whether ye know or not, that know I not clear.  
My knowledge whereof, to witness that ye  
know,

In full and few words (as I can) I shall show.

[Gg.iii.v.]

A notable fly hath late chanced to light  
In that spider's cobweb, the spider by that  
Charging the fly with desert of death by right;

The fly to deserve to die denying flat,  
 Beseeching the spider to hear him speak some-  
 what;  
 He granting him speech, and to judge his of-  
 fence  
 Standing with reason, law, custom, and con-  
 science.

The spider's challenge to the fly gave great  
 charge,  
 Whereto (as far as I could there understand)  
 The fly's defence was very lusty and large.  
 In which challenge and defence, when all was  
 scanned [hand;  
 To come to end, they two could not take in  
 But being driven to choose arbiters t'agree,  
 The fly chose a butterfly, the spider chose me.

This one of their many matters t'arbitrate,  
 At trial (by custom) on which side to lay  
 All holes, in that and all windows in each state;  
 The flies claiming freehold, for free passing  
 way;  
 The spiders for spiders said,—So, all hold they.  
 Whereon, we hearing all sides what could be  
 laid, [weighed  
 We could not agree how the case might be

To any one side of both; so that at end,  
 In our report (to that spider and that fly)  
 The case as we first found, we left it to depend,  
 The spider and fly in cobweb th'end to try;  
 Whereupon the flies, in a fume by and by,  
 Were suddenly up in a roght, on a rore.  
 Such a flock as I have never seen before.

[Gg.iv.r.]

No need to ask them wherefore their coming  
was, [fight;  
Their warlike fashion showed them bent to  
But in a moment about me they compass,  
And, without word of cause declared, wrong or  
right,

They drew me to a tree standing nigh in sight,  
Where, with halter about my neck, on ladder  
set, [get.  
Turn the ladder ! they cried, none other glace to

Saving the foresaid arbiter butterfly,  
Upon great and long suit, at last obtained  
Of them to hear me speak before I should die.  
But ere I spake (what to speak seeing unfeigned  
Life or death lie before me), I was constrained  
(As that short time would serve) to premeditate  
How to conserve myself, and the spider's state.

As affection natural moved me more  
To lean to the spiders than toward the flies,  
And of my tale the very kernel or core  
Must stand on two points (methought) in any  
wise;

Th'one, to persuade no fault in me to surmise  
Against them; th'other to make them to relent,  
By enforcing the force of spiders' force bent.

In first part of which tale, my faults I cleared  
That they (to touch me with) could any way lay;  
And where, by the rest of my tale, appeared  
Their deaths plain (as I their foe's force did dis-  
play)

They thereupon all well-nigh running away;  
I handling the tale so, from first part to end,  
That the most part (simple flies) took me their  
friend.

[Gg.iv.v.]

But the crafty fly, capital captain,  
 Opening (to the flies) my politic intent,  
 Unseen to the flies till he made them see it  
 plain,

Himself seeing his danger above all bent,  
 If the flies did flee, their flight then to prevent,  
 He inveighed such matter to them that anon  
 He 'couraged them to stand, all former fear  
 gone.

Whereupon, with their consent, he awarded  
 That I before the spiders, a tale to tell,  
 Should be sent forthwith, with forty flies  
 guarded;

Wherein if I made spiders fear flies as well  
 Or as much (in my saying serious or fell)  
 As I brought flies of spiders before in fear,  
 I should go quite; if not, at return hang there.

I said I would do my best, and therewithal,  
 Standing on the ladder, my two wings start out,  
 As in a time of our time is natural;  
 Which had, I flew guarded with this guarded  
 rout [stout.

Before the spider, having look strange and  
 But what of that? my curtsey once low made,  
 I usèd words my matter to persuade.

Where, although I would have told another tale,  
 Yet who may not as he will, must as he may;  
 Life was sweet, death was sour; nature did me  
 hale

To save my life, while my life in my tongue lay.  
 Short tale to make, in tale so did I there say  
 That spiders in fear of flies had agony  
 As much as flies of spiders had formerly.

[Hh.i.r.]

Wherewith the head spider fell in fell fury;  
 I feared he would (with his weapon) have killed  
 me;

And sure all my friends from Jersey to Jewry  
 Had not saved my life but he would have spilled  
 me,

Had not his foregrant warranted and willed  
 To come and go safe; but this passing over,  
 He entered a talk, the spiders to recover,

And encourage again, which in fine he did,  
 Bringing me in much disdain and more distrust.  
 He said that on both those parts I dissembled,  
 Creeping with spiders at times when I lust,  
 And flying with flies other times, even as just;  
 Where I to him meant nothing but honestly,  
 He reported my meaning clean contrary.

Ensamped, by my creeping with spiders first,  
 And last exampled by my fleeing with flies.  
 In rest of his tale told, he telling the worst  
 Against me and my tale that he could devise,  
 He such matter laid, and laid it in such wise,  
 That in courage (I say) were the spiders again,  
 We, with his defiance, returning amain.

To the flies by one fly all past repeated,  
 Which declaring me the spiders to have 'fraid,  
 As I was willed to do, straight was it treated  
 (Upon demand) whether in that I there said  
 I should have my life or not; which to be  
 weighed

Between two flies, a serious argument,  
 Whether I should live or die, was bigly bent.

[Hh.i.v.]

The one said that I by covenant ought to live.  
 Nay, said th'other, by covenant he ought to die ;  
 The first said,—As words of covenant do give  
 To bring the spider in fear, even so did I.  
 Th'other said, that fear held not permanently,  
 And the words fulfilled, the meaning not ful-  
 filled,  
 The covenant is not kept, in judgment well  
 skilled,

This argument they turned and tossed till at last  
 The friend quite overthrew th'adversary ;  
 And yet against me the most number straight  
 passed

As though th'argument had run clean contrary.  
 On the ladder I stood, straight to miscarry  
 From which at turning off, by the fly hangman,  
 Hold ! cried a fly far off, flinging toward us  
 then.

Which fly said the spider had made a decree  
 The fly in close prison with him detained,  
 Should straight lose his life, if the flies did  
 kill me ;  
 Whereupon they reprieved me to prison  
 chained,  
 With harnessed flies watched, and in stocks re-  
 mained,  
 Between hope and dread, whether to live or die,  
 As this side, or that side, should win victory.

Forthwith herewith, on the spider they gave  
 'sault,  
 Where five hundred spiders and five thousand  
 flies [haute,  
 Were slain. Abating on both sides courage

The flies retired, peace some way to devise.  
 The spiders were desirous of peace likewise;  
 But which part should begin suit, that peace to  
     move,  
 Both parts showed as much curtsey as little  
     love.

[*Hh.ii.r.*]

The flies had me before them bragging in boast  
 That since spiders to them for peace would not  
     sue, [crossed]

Spiders or flies one part of both should be  
 Quite out of this life, none left alive to view.  
 And straight to the ladder again they me drew,  
 Protesting that I should die ere they marched  
     thence, [pense]

I praying them my life might hang in sus-

While I were guarded again to the spider,  
 To sue to the spider, all in mine own name,  
 To see of what peace hap might be provider  
 At mine humble suit unto him for the same.

They granted, and sent me, to whom when I  
     came

I sued for peace, beseeching it the rather  
 For certain respects, which I then did gather.

Such as showed then high time peace to give  
     and take,

As danger to him and his, and then for me,  
 Most innocently cast away, for his sake,  
 Having, or looking, for no commodity  
 But only his favour; and hereupon he  
 (Seeming loth to grant, and glad to grant in-  
     deed)

Granted peace in form as forthwith shall pro-  
     ceed.

Under general pardon for all faults passed,  
 The flies must all away, and all war surcease;  
 I, set at liberty, no longer to lie fast;  
 Flies in windows to have half the holes in  
     peace;  
 The fly, with him in prison, not to release,  
 But to take an end at his hands, there or  
     thence, [science.  
 As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-

[*Hh.ii.v.*]

But note I must take this done all for my love,  
 In recompense of pain and peril had there.  
 This done, I and the flies there, as did behove,  
 Giving thanks and taking leave, thence gone we  
     were  
 To the flies, who flocked about me giving ear  
 To hear of peace, which when I there had  
     declared, [guard.  
 With thanks I was discharged of all captive

From whence I am (as you see) hither now  
     come, [played,  
 The one half of my whole tale having dis-  
 For of what I have to say this is the sum.  
 But now wherefore this what (now said) is said,  
 As I at beginning willed this what well weighed,  
 So wish I this wherefore to be weighed as well,  
 For safety of all ants, which I shall now tell.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 72 is here given in original.*]

[Hh.iii.r.]

¶Th'ant having said what he would say, willeth all ants to note why he said that he said. Which is to warn them by his harms to beware how they meddle in matters between spiders and flies.

Cap. 79.



[Hh.iii.v.]

WISE ants are warned by other ants' harms  
(ants say)  
And you, avoiding your harms by harms of  
mine,  
The why of my former tale ye then well weigh,

For of the what, that is the why, in fine.  
 Your hearing and following of which discipline  
 (With hearing and following my next words  
 here set)  
 Defence from my like harms I hope ye shall  
 get.

My which harms, though they show outwardly  
 to grow [own,  
 By war's foward chance, without fault of mine  
 Yet the high God knoweth, and my conscience  
 doth me show, [grown,  
 That these my harms of these my two faults are  
 Pride and covetousness, by corrupt blast blown  
 Into my heart inculked by fancy fond,  
 Which to warn you of, I'll make you under-  
 stand.

Though the spider sent for me ere I hence went,  
 Yet when I was sent for, proud was I to go,  
 Where I thought to grow in state more excel-  
 lent

Than any ant before had grown, and so,  
 Perking with spiders, in top of the window,  
 I thought therewith the spiders' equal to be,  
 And here, in anthills, ants a god should take  
 me.

And for the maintenance of that proud estate,  
 I covetously cast what way to find mean,  
 Being above all ants in place situate,  
 By preferment (at the spiders' hand) to glean  
 Office, fee, all that I could, to gather up clean;  
 Low curtsey, great riches, mirth, ease, love,  
 and laud,  
 I thought all should be offered, me to applaud.

[Hh.iv.r.]

But in fine, this was the fruit of this vain hope :  
Love, or laud, on no side ; on all, hate and  
blame ;

For golden chain at my neck, an hempen rope ;  
For reverence and praise, disdain and defame.  
Looking to win much, lose all, as in the same  
Showed my reward, at end of all, at hands all,  
Namely at spider's hands, who did me thither  
call.

As he, in granting peace to the flies, showed  
plain. [take

Which peace he said (I say) with flies he did  
To save my life, and to recompense of my pain,  
And for no cause else. But let us here make  
As it indeed had been done all my sake ;  
Yet the head and tail of this tale, joined nigh,  
Shall show that I right naught did win thereby.

What if to save my life that peace he then gave ?  
My life was out of peril till I came there,  
Brought by him, for him, to the brink of my  
grave.

Had I kept me here, neither peril nor fear  
Had my heart wounded as it did there whilere.  
This gift is like as if a thief (by false train),  
Robbed me of my good, and gave it me again.

I lost my time there, and I lost my thrift here ;  
In summer (ye know) we ants work busily  
For winter to provide our food every year ;  
But lack of this summer day's diligence  
May make me fast two days in winter (haply),  
And drive me (perhaps) ere winter all done be,  
To beg of ants, that might else have begged  
of me.

[Hh.iv.v.]

In all my which punishment at all whose hands  
 I take them, but as the great God's instruments.  
 His judgments are secret ; he useth his wands  
 Sometimes in appearance of outward intents  
 To one purpose, when his high wisdom assents  
 To use them for another, and sure  
 I think he now put so my trouble in ure.

For my two said faults willing you to beware  
 Of all ambitious and covetous desire,  
 In avoiding (for my like offence) my like care,  
 Which if ye do, fleeing desire to aspire,  
 Then can ye this lesson as I would require.  
 And not doing it, upon this warning given,  
 Ye will thereto (by my like plague) to be driven.

And did we consider but this present life,  
 Yet must we live in an order here (perde !)  
 The God hath placed us all to live out of strife,  
 Spiders, flies, and ants, each sort in their  
 degree.

Spiders, in head parts of windows, the heads  
 be ;  
 Flies in the midst, the body as it were ;  
 Ants at the low part, the feet, accounted there.

And as a spider overmatcheth a fly,  
 So is a fly as far too big for an ant ;  
 Which seemeth wrought by divine providence  
 (think I),  
 As our degrees are in order distant,  
 So the degrees of our strengths are discrepant ;  
 And where all three sorts keep quietly their  
 place,  
 All live together in quiet wealthy case.

[I.i.r.]

But if they (for change of place) begin to strive,  
As spiders and flies (two parts of three) did  
now,

They may hastily strive, and slowly thrive;  
And to the spider in our allegiant vow,  
In all lawful things, all we ants always bow  
Without grief or grudge; but if war again rise,  
What should ants meddle between spiders and  
flies?

Be warned here again (by my harm) of med-  
dling.

Meddle we in things of our vocation;  
One fly's finger thrusteth ten ants down head-  
ling;

Ants are not made to walk in war's station,  
Nor to meddle in severe consultation.

Meddle we in our molehills at the window's  
feet, [meet.]

And let spiders and flies do as they think  
They shall for me, (quoth he) and for us, cried  
they;

And to their business busily they went.

Wherewith come four flies fleeing, fast as they  
may,

And at low part of the window, by assent,  
They lighted, and the spider then himself bent  
From his house to his chair, and I forthwith  
Set in my place, of their words to note the pith.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in  
original.*] ]

[Ii.i.v.]

¶Four flies (in the name of all flies) at the cob-web, thanking the spider for pardon and peace, declaring the conditions and the performance on their part, sue to the spider on his part to perform his grant, in laying out and possessing them of their limits with half the holes in the window, which he granteth, bidding them a little time stay, in which while he sendeth the youngest spider of his twain to the ant, praying him to come to him again, to divide and deliver the holes to the flies as the spider will appoint them.

Cap. 80.



[I.i.ii.r.]

ONE fly of those four (made the mouth for all,  
 At curtsey to the spider had) these words had,  
 Framed in manner (to the matter) formal.  
 Right honourable sir, most dear and most dread,  
 All flies (they of your prosperous estate most glad),  
 Have commanded us to commend them to you  
 Humbly, and duly as duty biddeth them bow.

So thanking your gifts to them, pardon and peace,

Upon these conditions, as they understand :  
 Wars and conspiracies on their part to cease ;  
 Th'ant to be set free, out of their captive band ;  
 The fly here in prison to have end at your hand,  
 As standeth with reason, law, custom and conscience ; [hence.]  
 Half holes in windows theirs, all times from

Which covenants they receive, and put in ure,  
 In what they should do, and in what they shall have.

They thereupon send us to know your pleasure ;  
 What time and what way ye will take to vouch-  
 save [gave,

To point and possess them in that ye them  
 Binding them (by indifferent divided rate),  
 To wish continuance of your present state.

At their curtsey made, to this the spider said :  
 This suit I grant : tarry my return again.  
 In he went, and herein to have the ant's aid,

To th'ant he sent the least spider of his twain,  
Praying th'ant to come to him and take the  
pain

To be his deputy t'insess the flies, in fine,  
With half the holes whereas the spider would  
assign.

[*ii.ii.v.*]

Th'ant, spying his cousin coming, liked it not.  
Some thankless office was toward again  
(thought he).

Through the window, I saw he quickly gat :  
One leg and his waist in swadeband rolled to be,  
And crutches by his side, a two or a three.  
That spider coming to th'ant whereas he lay,  
These, or these like words, that spider did first  
say.



¶Upon this message done, th'ant feigned a let  
of his coming by a hurt mischancing him that  
morning. With which answer the young spider  
returneth to the old.

Cap. 81.



[Ii.iii.v.]

**C**OUSIN ant, rest you merry. Cousin (quoth  
th'ant)

Ye be welcome; what good tidings do ye bring?  
My father prayeth you (quoth he) at this in-  
stant

To come to him, and for the holes delivering,  
Which he in windows granted at war's ending,  
To be therein his deputy of trust,  
To see flies possessed of their number just.

Good cousin (quoth the ant) it will not be.  
 In a dark house (right now) where candle was  
     light,  
 The light dazzling mine eyes, it so blinded me,  
 That against the snuff of a candle, burning  
     bright, [flight,  
 I flew, force of which fire and snuff in which  
 Mischance (that all misadventures always  
     bring), [wings.  
 Brake one of my legs, and burned one of my

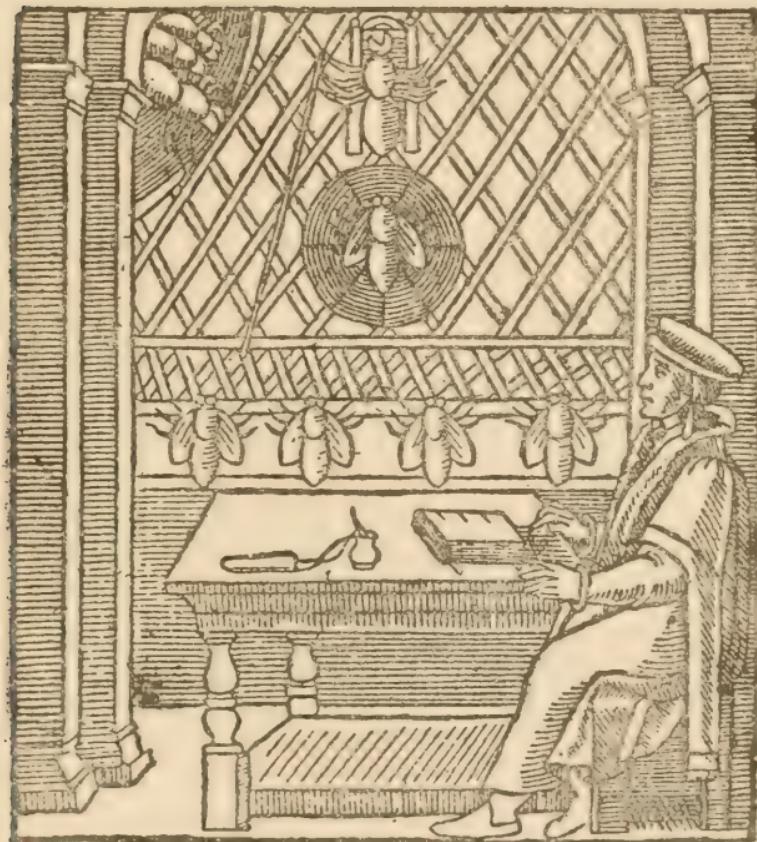
So that I now can neither creep nor fly,  
 The which for mine own harm grieveth me  
     right sore,  
 And as sore for his sake, that now can not I  
 In this case serve him as I have done before.  
 Thus commend me, cousin; I can say no more.  
 That spider took his leave, and to his father  
     straight  
 Told what answer he had at th'ant in receipt.

Who, seeing the ant did not come, forth he  
     went,  
 With a long rod in his hand taking his chair;  
 Which when I saw, to see further what he  
     meant,  
 To my chair in my place I did then repair.  
 The four flies before him stood in order fair.  
 Wherewith (in few words) a brief tale there  
     told he,  
 Which done, he possessed them in plat here  
     to see.

[Ii.iv.7.]

The spider, after a few words to the four flies, assigneth to them all the small holes beneath, half the holes in number, but scant the sixth part of the room. At which they somewhat grudge; but they must take them or none.

Cap. 82.



[Ii.iv.8.]

FRIENDS flies,—friends, I say, if ye friendly  
use me,  
You four, and all flies your friend shall find me.  
And to make you unable to accuse me

HEY. III.

A A

In lack to perform as promise doth bind me.  
 Upon your present suit I have inclined me  
 To assign and possess you, here and elsewhere,  
 Of half the holes in windows where I power  
 bear.

Exampled by these holes, just half, as they  
 stand

Them, and none but them, to have and to hold.  
 Wherewith he pointed beneath with his wand  
 To all the small holes, saying what fly that  
 would [told,

Touch any hole there but those to them then  
 He should die therefore; which plat thus dis-  
 posed,

One fly (to the spider) these words disclosed.

Sir (may it like you) the meaning of all flies  
 Was to have, with half the holes, half the plat  
 here.

And I, fly (quoth the spider) meant otherwise.  
 Without further pleading, take as doth appear,  
 And think yourselves well handled; for this is  
 clear,—

I might (if I would), my grant again withdraw,  
 And that withdrawing justify well by law.

At time of this grant, I was (as who say)  
 Stressed by you, your prisoner (as it were),  
 And all bonds so forced, of no force are they;  
 Be answered and warned rebellion to forbear.  
 As every fly had had a flea in his ear,  
 At curtsey low made from the spider they slank.  
 They marvellous blank, and the spider as  
 crank.

[*Kk.i.r.*  
What have we won now? (quoth one) as they  
took wing.

Wise flies say as good sit still, as rise and fall.  
But what a fall have we now by our rising?  
Before, we had some part; now we have lost  
all. [shall.

In effect, yea (quoth one) this hath been and  
Where flies (with spiders) in this kind of strife  
strive,

We win nought but wretchedness; the craft  
will not thrive.



[Kk.i.v.]

The four flies flown thence, the spider to the fly in prison layeth that in all kinds of trial that day on both parts laid, he thinketh his own part approved best, as he thinketh the fly would think were he a spider. Contrary judgment whereof the fly thinketh in the spider were he a fly. Whereupon they agree to change places (each for the time) to imagine and set forth other's part the best they can.

Cap. 83.



THEY being thus gone, the spider sitting  
still,

The fly fast before him, as he erst had been,  
To draw to end, in hand with the fly he fill.

Fly (quoth he), now hast thou in this matter  
seen

All kinds of trial that can be seen, I ween;

Reason, law, and custom, full reasoned and  
cast,

Arbitrament, and rebellion at last.

Which rebellion (I think) thou didst devise,  
When thou didst roun the butterfly in the ear.  
Nay (quoth the fly) the truth is clear otherwise.  
I prayed him to pray flies all war to forbear,  
Which he will say. Fly, (quoth he) say he or  
swear,

I trust none of you. This trieth truth like in  
As to ask my fellow whether I be a thief.

But were it so or not, I forgive it thee.  
In all this bibble babble had here this day,  
What hast thou won thereby? that let us see.  
All cases past here indifferently to weigh,  
Weigh more on my side than on thine, I dare-  
say. [would you,  
I say and think nay (quoth he) and so think  
Were ye a fly, in case as I am here now.

And wert thou a spider, as I am here placed,  
I think thou wouldst think as I think, and to  
grow

Some way to end. One trial more to taste,  
Let us change places a while, for to know  
What change of opinion that change may show,  
I 'magine myself, to be a fly,  
Thou thinking thyself, a spider unfeignedly.

Thou the spider, and I the fly to be named;  
Thou reasoning for the spider all that thou  
may,

And I for the fly in like case will be framed.

This take I (quoth the fly) a very good way.

Place and case (in appearance) forthwith change  
they;

The fly solemnly set in the spider's chair,  
The spider to the fly's base place did repair.



[Kk.iii.r.]

¶They having changed places, they allege each  
for his dissembled side. Wherein the fly anon is  
so allured to pride and ambition in occupying  
(for the while) the spider's stately place, that  
he at last with an oath affirmeth that spiders are  
owners of all windows. The spider, granting it  
true, starteth to the fly, seeming to take end  
upon the fly's own judgment.

Cap. 84.



[Kk.iii.v.]

THE fly being once set in the spider's place,  
Advanced himself, setting hands under his  
side.

The spider crouched, in countenance mild and  
base,

Looking pale and wan, as though he should  
have died.

Which change (upon this sudden) when I espied,  
It printed in me a wonderful wonder,  
To see parties (from their parts) so asunder.

New matter they laid small, but that most  
touched

That had been erst alleged, both parts growing  
Little and little, stoutly to be couched  
Each to other's, against his own part now  
showing;

Namely, the fly for the spider's part crowing  
With spiderlike spiteful words, as hot and high  
As he had been the spider, and th'other the fly.

He was from the fly's part so carried away,  
By being suddenly there thus elevate,  
That all claim laid by the spider there that day  
The fly ruled for right of most lawful right  
rate.

So farforth he forgat where and how he sate,  
That upon the chair-boll hard beating his fist,  
Spiders own all windows, he sware by gods  
blist.

The spider granted it true, starting out straight  
To the fly, saying, Sir, ye have said right well.  
We need no longer (for judge or judgment)  
wait; [here tell.]

Our chief point in judgment yourself doth  
Oh, sir, (quoth the fly, and flat to ground he  
fell) [had]

I beseech you hear how (by pride here now  
I was stricken beetle blind, and bedlam mad.

The fly out of that chair fallen flat before the spider, perceiving his oversight and danger therein, he declareth how change of place changed his affection. In discoursing of which case, he partly toucheth the commodity of adversity, and the discommodity of prosperity, beseeching the spider to relinquish all advantage therein to be taken against him. Which the spider granteth.

Cap. 85.



THE spider, leaning to his chair, said:  
Say on.

Sir, (said the fly) by vainglorious pride,  
It stealing sly and suddenly me upon,

I was so puffed up here so blindly myself to  
guide,

That I neither saw yours, nor yet my own side.  
I, once but set in place of your authority,  
Took myself straight in case of your prosperity.

Which place and case, how they may right  
judgment blind !

That see I now, and never till now could see.  
Wherein, I being but a shadow assigned  
For this time to sit, yet mark (I beseech ye)  
How from a fly's state to a spider's degree  
I (at moment) advanced myself to proceed,  
Not with flies, but with spiders, all I decreed.

My which blindness (in some respect) doth  
stretch

To those in places past, as debitees,  
They keeping countenance of my like high  
reach,

Looking each as high, when he his suitor sees,  
As his head master of far higher degrees.

Which flock (as I am now) wherever it flocks,  
All made (in reason), reason's mocking-stocks.

See more, how beastly blindness did my bent  
bend

Life and liberty of me, and of all flies,  
Here lying and bleeding, except I it defend,  
All that notwithstanding pride bleared both  
mine eyes

Against them and myself sentence to devise.

I was a spider, I ; I took flies as fleas ;  
Pride goeth before, shame cometh after, me  
to seize !

[Ll.i.r.]

But pride had here a subtle sly allurer,  
 Which the countenance of prosperity was;  
 Vain liking of which state was my procurer  
 To pride and blindness thereby, that here did  
 pass;

Which pride to present, prosperity is a glass,  
 As doth (on the other part) adversity  
 First procure and then present humility.

Prosperity (we see) made me forget clear  
 Myself, my matter, all flies, and also you,  
 Which, in adversity, I held in mind here.  
 To you, as duty required, I could there bow;  
 Reasons for me and all flies I could avow;  
 Our perfect sight from blindness standeth not  
 (I see)

In prosperity, but in adversity.

Which showeth in this one change of our two  
 places,

My place of adversity gave you such sight  
 That, in our reasoning of both our cases,  
 Your saying showed you to see the very right;  
 Your place of prosperity blinded me quite,  
 As I perceive it doth blind all in like case,  
 Save such as therein have especial grace.

In lack whereof I (thus graceless a minion,  
 Thus loudly and lewdly to lie) humbly pray  
 Neither my judgment, nor yet mine opinion,  
 Any word to be judged that I here did say.  
 But (as all lies should) let these vanish away.  
 Thou art (quoth the spider) a monster now  
 wox;

In mine eye a fly, and in mine ear a fox.

[Ll.i.v.]

Like a fox, wily thou dost here devise  
 For helping of thy part and hurting of mine,  
 To take my lies true tales, and thy true tales  
 lies,  
 And further slandering me and my state; in  
 fine,  
 Thou hast here set forth this devilish disci-  
 pline;  
 Pride hideth knowledge (sayest thou) by pros-  
 perity,  
 Humility showeth knowledge, by adversity.

As though captive caitifs saw all in misery,  
 And prosperous princes saw nought. But I see  
 Thou art in a wrong box for case presently.  
 The fly, seeing rightnought won hereby would  
 be,  
 But danger of displeasure, thereupon he  
 Passed over this argument, and upon that,  
 Said this to the spider, at his foot laid flat.

Sir, I beseech you my blindness showed here  
 last,  
 Forgive, and none advantage on me take  
 In any word of mine, against me there passed.  
 Fly (quoth he) I forgive thee for pity's sake.  
 To change places again, asunder they break.  
 Wherewith the spider, in form formal and  
 cold,  
 These words following to the fly forthwith told.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 38 is here given in  
 original.*]

[Ll. ii. r.]  
 ¶ The spider, upon a glance given at his desert  
 of thank to be had at the fly's hand, allegeth  
 custom to be his warrant to destroy the fly,  
 which the fly cannot deny. Whereupon he de-  
 sireth that the case may be reasoned in con-  
 science. Which the spider now granteth.

Cap. 86.



[Ll. ii. v.]

FLY, if thou canst use the reason that thou  
 hast,  
 Thou canst (and wilt) thank me in many re-  
 spect.  
 Never was there fly in cobweb thus placed,

That had the like favour in the like effects  
 That thou hast had ; but necessity directs  
 This to be true : in the day most long here past,  
 Yet they (evermore) ring to evensong at last.

As who say, things most long after beginning,  
 Yet must they (at last) needly come to an end,  
 Which after long time wrought to have in win-  
 ning, [pend,  
 We now shall win which end shall briefly de-  
 Upon one brief reason that I shall extend.  
 Which reason to confute thee, shall be so plain  
 That straight to yield thee reason shall thee  
 constrain.

Which lurketh (and I all this time have let it  
 lurk)  
 In custom, one principle of the four  
 On which pillars I promised should stand all  
 this work ;  
 Which invincible reason I (to this hour)  
 Have kept, to hear (as I have heard) bran and  
 flour [lay,  
 Of all that thou couldst (this day) for thy part  
 Which (for full conclusion) hear me to thee say.

Custom, one chief post principal (as erst said)  
 Declareth, and hath declared, this six thousand  
 year, [stayed,  
 All flies (or any fly) in cobwebs (or cobweb)  
 However they come there, if they there appear  
 No reason in reason and law alleged here  
 Could discharge them thence, but straight there  
 cometh amain [brain.  
 A spider, who slayeth him and sucketh out his

[Ll. iii. r.]

Here seest thou thy life lost, to begin withal  
 By custom, and for windows claimed in interest  
 For flies general, agreement general  
 (With their receiving it) an end hath expressed.  
 Th'end had I mean, upon rebellion sest.  
 But for thy life (by custom) canst thou ought  
 say

Why thou should by custom live? Sir (said  
 he) nay.

Well (quoth the spider) thou seest reason and  
 law

So yield to custom here, that in any trial  
 Those twain to conquer custom here we never  
 saw.

I have to this (quoth the fly) no denial.

What thing (quoth the spider) hast thou in  
 special

To help thee, beside law, custom, and reason?  
 Conscience (quoth the fly) I hope cometh in  
 season.

True (quoth the spider) now at end it hath  
 place; [lay]

What hast thou (in conscience) for thy life to  
 Against accustom'd custom in this case?

Enough (quoth he) if conscience bear any sway.  
 Yes (quoth the spider) be bold of that ye may;  
 That fourth shall have full place, as firm as  
 those three.

I thank you (quoth the fly); this showeth  
 charity.

[*The tail-piece as on p. 86 is here given in  
 original.*]

[Ll.iii.v.]

¶They both lay sundry sharp reasons in conscience for the spider's life and death. But the spider in conclusion draweth these four principles (reason, law, custom, and conscience, which he at beginning granted to try all by) so to combine that he maketh thereby an appearance, to show the fly convinced; and straight by custom he giveth judgment of the fly's death, to which the fly yieldeth, praying to speak with twelve flies before he die. And it is granted.

Cap. 87.



[Ll. iv. r.]

**B**Y conscience I claim here now (quoth the fly)  
 In this place (till now place of mine imprisonment),

Not to be in prison, but in sanctuary,  
 Whereas charged parties be innocent  
 Of all such charged crimes as to them are bent,  
 There doth conscience in every place defend  
 Those charged parties, discharging them at end.

If (quoth the spider) there were no difference  
 Between a fly innocent and arrogant,  
 Then must I discharge thee (even of conscience).

But if innocency on your part here want,  
 Then is this clause (for your discharge) no warrant.

But go to; make proof approbately appear  
 How ye prove yourself an innocent now here.

Sir, proof that I innocently hither came,  
 Appeareth in my known coming against my will;

And since I came, that I an innocent am,  
 I hope your conscience (and I know your skill)  
 Will judge my fact here not ill or not so ill  
 Whereby ye (with conscience) can rightfully  
 Either kill me, or keep me here thus to lie.

What have I done, in conscience strait or large,  
 To make reason, law, or custom, bite or bark?  
 I lay and laid (quoth the spider) to thy charge

Breach of my house, not made with a thousand  
mark.

No (quoth he) but one-quarter of one hour's  
work, [pain,

Without one penny cost or one pin's worth  
Re-edifieth your house in prime state again.

[Ll.iv.v.]

Which yourself may do, and must naturally;  
That work is your talent, given for exercise;  
In lack whereof, (by idleness) ye straight die.  
But put case custom, my fact a wrong here  
tries;

Yet how can conscience death or pain devise  
To me, for that I to you occasion give  
To work the work lacking which ye cannot  
live?

Though (quoth the spider) by nature work we  
must,

Yet is't neither conscience, nor our avail  
To work in cobwebs, have we lust or no lust  
At wagging (in cobwebs) of every fly's tail.  
So doth it (quoth the fly) conscience likewise  
quail

To hang a fly by the neck or by the neb,  
For wagging his tail in a spider's cobweb.

This case is (in conscience) very much like  
As a fish breaking a fisher's set net;  
It set to take the fish and the fisher did pike  
A quarrel to him, and would conscience set  
To kill the poor fish. This were far and foul  
fet;

And no fouler fetched than conscience set to be  
To kill me for breach of this net set for me.

But did I maliciously do you much wrong,  
 And some harm, as harm or wrong here ye  
     have none, [strong,  
 Yet shall your revengement show malice more  
 If ye both detain and kill me thereupon.  
 Come that wrong here in ure, conscience is  
     gone [sworn  
 As far from you as from him that had now  
 The death of an innocent, but last might borne.

[*Mm.i.r.*  
 You not offended (as ye will not, I hope)  
 This last principle of these four, conscience—  
 It giving me (above th'other three) full scope  
 Of advantage as custom giveth assistance  
 To your part, in present charge of mine offence—  
 I must make my sheet anchor, to make my way,  
 As you make (and I grant) custom yours (no  
     nay).

Spare not (quoth the spider) that anchor sheet  
     ought,  
 The best thou canst therewith to take anchor-  
     hold. [I mought)  
 I thank you (quoth he) and would crave (if  
 Your answer in conscience, full to unfold  
 To one question of me, in few words told.  
 Thy question (quoth the spider) propone thou,  
 And mine answer to it, thou shalt have even  
     now.

This is then, Sir, I put case, quoth the fly :  
 My young master spider your son went astray,  
 Wandering here and there (at adventure mean  
     I),

Wherewith slily one laid a thing in the way.  
 Whereat the babe fell, and it thus brought to  
     bay,  
 Th'other, for falling there, killed it out of hand.  
 Think ye conscience would warrant this deed  
     to stand?

Nay (quoth he) conscience is the doer of right.  
 Mitigating fierce force of extremities  
 That giveth or taketh right by rigorous might.  
 Conscience (quoth the fly) my judgment so  
     decrees,    [agrees;  
 And my case with this case in all points  
 No difference between them, to be lost or won,  
 Saving that I am not your mastership's son.

[*Mm.i.v.*  
 For in like case put, I wandered about here,  
 Innocently, as that innocent there did,  
 And by these cobwebs, cast in my way thus  
     near,  
 In this babe exampling, I am exampled ;  
 Innocently as he was, I am masked.  
 Think if I were your child, what ye could think  
     then,  
 Conscience, or no conscience, this to scan ?

In faith, fly (quoth the spider) to tell the truth,  
 No conscience (or hard conscience) I take this.  
 Nay, no conscience (quoth the fly) truth so  
     sheweth,  
 So that conscience on my side clearly is  
 As custom is of yours ; and ye know, I wis,  
 That custom alone doth oft, and may ever  
 Use judgment of abuse, and conscience never.

Well said, fly (said he) had I no more to say  
 To this that thou now saith than I have yet  
 said, [day.]

Then hadst thou here won the victory this  
 But reason, law, custom, and conscience, erst  
 laid, [weighed,]

How I granted thee hearing in those four  
 Thou shalt hear in few words, and we there-  
 upon

Shall the more clearly conclude this case anon.

The words of my grant t'adjudge thee, thus  
 they draw,

As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-  
 science.

Not with reason, custom, conscience, or law :  
 This *and*, and this *or*, fly, make much differ-  
 ence. [ance ;

That *and*, implieth all four placed in assist-  
 That *or*, importeth one, or any one of all ;  
 And here is the gap, fly, wherein lieth the gall.

[Mm.ii.r.]

And a point for flies' learning at spider's hand,  
 Though ye flies' learning above spiders' com-  
 pare. [and,

But here learn of me, fly; this conjunctive,  
 Conjoineth these four said terms jointly to  
 prepare

Trial in this case, as they all may declare,  
 The tone with the tother, all in property  
 Knit best in knot of conjoined unity.

Well (quoth the fly) then conscience shall be  
 one.

Yea (quoth the spider) and custom another.  
 Sir, then will those two fall at a fray anon.

If they do, reason shall stickle them, brother,  
To make them agree where each impugneth  
other. [complete :

But bring conscience, thy champion, armed  
How conscience challengeth custom let us weet.

Sir, I coming (as I came) unwillingly,  
And none offensive harm, in me doth appear,  
Conscience chargeth custom with tyranny  
In killing (or keeping) me innocent here.  
Which case, reason recordeth for case clear.  
This charge (quoth the spider) to discharge  
plain,  
Hear what custom saith to conscience again.

Custom saith : all windows are spiders' of right.  
Then conscience must say that flies have done  
wrong [flight ;

Through windows (without leave) to take their  
To make conscience grant this, reason is  
strong. [long,

Till spiders (quoth he) time present, and past  
Do prove windows theirs, as they never did  
yet,

Conscience and reason denieth this every whit.  
[Mm.ii.v.

But admit we that all windows were your own,  
Flies (without your leave) passing offensively,  
Though custom allege for th'offence death here  
grown,

Yet conscience (in this case) seeth death  
tyranny.

Reason granting it to show tyranniously.  
It were too much here to fine by the purse,  
But to fine by the poll, what fiend could poll  
worse?

Thou thinkest (quoth the spider) conscience  
thinketh it strange

That flies by custom should die for this offence ;  
But conscience, with reason ranging in range,  
In cause of custom's usage, as conscience  
May have with reason herein full conference,  
Reasonably reasoning this present case,  
Conscience (by reason) shall give custom place.

I say (as I erst said) when a fly or flies  
In this or any window in cobwebs light,  
Any spider that within that window lies,  
Shall kill him, and suck out his (or their) brain  
quite ; [right,

Which, begun by nature, custom followeth  
Nature conceiving, but for this her sharp law,  
Flies would have marred all for lack of orderly  
awe.

And as nature in spiders wrought this defence,  
So reason in man was driven to work the  
same,

Cain's generation making resistance  
Against all men that quiet order would frame,  
(As you against us do) then those men to tame,  
And defend the quiet in their quiet cause,  
Reason to th'unquiet, gave our like sharp laws.

[Mm.iii.r.

But reason to them wrought not this to th'in-  
tent

To catch them and kill them tyrannously,  
But to save them, by terror in their eyes bent  
To provoke them to flee th'occasion, whereby  
They might flee their ill, felt thereby formerly.  
Which as reason in man did (and doth) con-  
sider,  
So did nature in us both concur together.

Nature in us, reason (I say) so allowed,  
 That this law of nature in us, laid on flies,  
 Reason to man, for order in man, hath vowed.  
 For breaking a wall by night man as soon dies  
 As flies for cobwebs breach by day, which exercise

Conscience (by reason) not kicking at for man,  
 Conscience (by reason) kicketh not at for flies  
 then.

Reason in man worketh man to work (quoth the fly) [th'ill;

Sharp laws more to save the good than to slay  
 Nature in spiders worketh sharp laws cruelly,  
 Not to save the good, but good and ill to kill,  
 Only killing all on all to feed their fill.

Thou liest (quoth he); we work cobwebs everywhere

To save flies by fear, cobwebs to forbear.

Thus reason hath conscience and custom agreed, [knows,

Whereto law not repugnant, all the world Whereupon (without more parting) to proceed, Concordance of these principles here so shows, That here, hear thine end, fly, for here thine end grows.

By custom (it aided with these other said three),  
 Thy present death I presently here decree.

[Mm.iii.v.

The fly fared as though he would have spoken more,

But his heart wonderly fainted and failed;  
 His judgment of death astonished him so sore,

(In that he saw his speech right naught pre-  
vailed

To be from death delivered or bailed),  
That down he sank upon his knees and hands,  
Requesting the spider in case as next stands.

Good master spider, since the case stands thus,  
That die I must, folly were it for me here  
To plead this case further; it passed by dis-  
cuss;

All pleading or reasoning I give over clear,  
Submitting and committing my life most dear  
Into your hands, beseeching you, ere I die,  
To grant me one petition; more crave not I.

That is that I (before you) my mind may say,  
To twelve flies, which speech I promise faith-  
fully [weigh.

Either with you, or not against you, shall  
I grant (quoth the spider). And by and by,  
I know not whether by chance, or purposely,  
A dozen flies about the cobweb's side placed  
were, [there.

To whom this following the fly said then and



[Mm.iv.r.]

**T**he fly (to twelve grave flies for all flies) giveth his advice for avoiding their perils by their strife had in windows against spiders. The great ground of which tale standeth most upon consideration of these three things,—wherefore they strive, with whom they strive, and how they strive.

Cap. 88.



[Mm.iv.v.]

**C**OUSINS and country flies, each one of you all  
Another myself, as each of all flies are,  
I have (at suit), obtained you hither to call,

Minding my conscience to you to declare,  
 In such a time and such a thing to prepare,  
 As the time most meet to make you credit me,  
 And the thing most meet to you told to be.

First, as touching time, no time in my time  
 past, [frail)

When I was more prosperous (and so more  
 Than I this time am, yet all times, first and  
 last, [fail.

Your trust in my truth did not any time  
 But what time should credence set up so his  
 sail, [hold,

As this time, when life time shall no more time  
 But till time this my tale (to be told) be told?

In all sorts of sects of civil discipline,  
 Of all times in life of any fly, I trow,  
 In time of his known death, coming straight  
 like mine, [show)

Credence of his word (he fiend nor fool in  
 To credit his matter must that time most grow.  
 What vanity were this, in ought to devise  
 Lying now a-dying, to lie and devise lies?

Of all times for credit (I say) none like this;  
 And secondly, touching the thing here to tell,  
 Hearing thereof, no doubt most meet for you is,  
 Which thing is the strife of furious force fell  
 Between spiders and flies, wherein to expell  
 And kill all occasions in time to come,  
 Of my last will (in my last words) hear the  
 sum.

[*Nn.i.r.*  
 What way is herein best for spiders to take,  
 That can themselves tell much better than  
 can I;  
 I am a fly, no spider nor spider's make

To control the spider's part, but heartily  
 I pray the great God their hearts to mollify  
 As temperance may temper their claim touching  
 this,  
 To give right, and take right, as most rightful  
 is.

But in right of either part to determine aught,  
 What they for their part, or you for yours  
 should have,

Shift that among you, for it foreseeth me  
 naught. [grave.]

Meseemeth I hear the mattock digging my  
 The Crown of the whole world, who it me  
 now gave, [win,]

His good-will must I thank, but for aught to  
 I take not the gift worth the point of a pin.

And where you (and all flies) are as sure to die  
 As am I now, your times to you unknown sure,  
 Advantage of you in my known death have I,  
 In having some time of remorse, to procure  
 Forgiveness of former life, led in lewd lure.  
 Where you may (without remorse) suddenly go,  
 And where the tree falleth there lieth it,—clerks  
 say so.

But for profitable purpose towards you,  
 In purpose purposed to you here by me,  
 Your imaginations I pray to draw you now  
 Into my person, as in my case to be,  
 To work affection, to win effect in ye,  
 To conceive and receive things that I shall  
 move,

Which to your behoof behovingly behove.

[N*n.i.v.*]

Three principles whereon my tale to contrive,  
And to proceed upon, are these to prepose;  
Wherefore we strive, with whom we strive,  
    how we strive. [thereof goes

Wherefore we strive,—ye know the cause  
For holes in windows, which quarrels to dis-  
close,

Our coming to them and going from them  
    sought, [nought.

Shall show our winning small, or rather right

First for our coming to them: who can dis-  
    cribe

How many flies have pressed possession to win,  
That never could get possession alive.

But maimed and killed down right at their en-  
    tering in?

And such as do come in (where spiders do spin)  
Most wise fly devising to sit there most fast,  
May think his first hour (or each hour) there  
    his last.

Few flies (I think) have 'scaped longer here  
    than I, [and fear,

My which time being spent between hope  
Yet at last (for all my shifts) lo! where I lie,  
Where no ransom my redemption may rear,  
But my life remediless I must forbear.

Come with danger, bide with fear, depart with  
    death,—

Too hasty a journey to take with one breath.

In this said first principle, what we strive for,  
Commodity therein proof doth thus witness,  
The more flies have of it, flies' danger the  
    more;

The less flies have of it, flies' danger the less.

Then is no whit best, for who doth aught possess,  
[ware

Each pennyworth of pleasure of such possessed  
Bringeth more than counterpoise of danger  
and care.

[*Nn.ii.7.*]  
Beggars flies before thieves flies may sing (we  
say) [see]

Rich flies before true flies here do weep (we  
The richest winning fly in windows to weigh;  
If any winning there, any riches be,  
As the best thing won there is but fly's liberty.  
What is the winning, won and kept with such  
strife,

That hourly winneth death or deadly fear of life?

It is a winning better lost than won,  
And so these windows are, wherefore we strive.  
With whom we strive now, secondly to run?  
With our biggers to contend, we here contrive  
A match as much unmeet for us to thrive  
As may be matched for two things here to try—  
First thing their power, most thing their policy.

To their much power, our power, oft times  
thought more

By number, many small making a great,  
Their policy (keeping their power in store)  
Hath most times erst brought us ourselves to  
beat.

What winning is in this matched match to get?  
None; wherefore with whom we strive (I think  
it best),

To leave off strife, and live by loss in rest.

Now thirdly, how or in what manner we strive.  
To tell plain truth, in my worst time to lie,  
Spice of rebellion our strife sheweth to con-  
trive.

Spiders are placed above, superiorly,  
And flies beneath them placed inferiorly.  
Then may it seem, as they above us have  
place,  
So have they above us like rule in like case.

[*Nn.ii.v.*]

Which case granted, in striving against them  
thus,

Our matter standing in state of most right,  
Yet is our manner wrong and seditious.  
No law alloweth flies to win their right by fight  
Between private flies, and law inhibiteth quite  
Any flies to fight against their high heads,  
But rather suffer, as obedience leads.

Wherefore we strive, ye see trifles they are;  
With whom we strive, their policy passeth our  
power;

How we strive doth sedition declare.

Three parts without melody in the part of  
our. [sour,

Our part hath a face here no crab more  
To move flies (henceforward) to turn their faces  
From strife with spiders, in quarreling cases.

To which, you drawing your imagination  
As though ye stood in my state at this present,  
Your own consent must give confirmation  
My words herein past to have a true extent,  
And further the sheet-anchor experiment.

What ye lost at spiders' hands, late before  
this,

A full ratification of my tale that is.

And if that any fly will demand of me  
 What mean flies may use best their right to  
 obtain,

Mine answer is : not in harness *cap-a-pie*  
 Besieging ('stead of beseeching) to constrain ;  
 Not stir with every fly stirred by bedlam brain,  
 Sturdily standing with bills in foul fighting,  
 But humbly suing, with bills of fair writing.

[*Nn.iii.r.*]

By aught (in any law) that ever I wist,  
 Thus may flies sue for right, and not only may,  
 But sue so flies must, forbidden to resist  
 Their higher powers by violence (any way);  
 Which way not helping flies, their way is to  
 pray

Unto the great God to work spiders consent  
 To give and take right in right rated extent.

But further (in this case) where any flies go  
 Of long time, of late time, and this time is seen,  
 Yea, seen, heard, and felt, in our present  
 wrought woe,

That we are wrongdoers, and ever have been.  
 Our works herein witnessing so, that I ween.  
 No fly so foolish but he doth understand  
 Our harm for wrong working we have at God's  
 hand.

This to be true I think and have thought,  
 Which (master spider) may suspicion clear  
 In your suspecting me for late tumult wrought.  
 But on my death I take (which I shall take here)  
 I never avowed (nor allowed) to draw near  
 Any number by lawless usurped powers,  
 But as peaceably stood with God's peace and  
 yours.

But for fine: friends, in your beholding my death  
 As th' image of your own deaths plainly to pur-  
     port, [eath  
 In that one hour's quarter ye are sure un-  
 To 'scape the same, to get aught by power  
     extort,  
 Or get or keep aught in any wrongful sort,  
 That sight, with thinking of my words in the  
     rest, [surest.  
 May henceforth of strife here bring your side

[Nn.iii.v.]

Behold your deaths in me, by uncertain life;  
 Behold your dread in me, your lives' account to  
     make; [endeth your strife;  
 Behold wherefore ye strive, and that death  
 Behold with whom and how ye strive (as I  
     spake); [take;  
 Behold the losing gain, that winneth loss to  
 Beholding these winnings, with the jeopardies,  
 Showeth holes in windows (to behold) vanities.

And so all holes in windows to take and use,  
 That none offensive strife flies' abuse procure,  
 But peaceably, as due obedience indues  
 To put having or craving of right in ure,  
 This crave I of you for love to you most pure.  
 And thus (praying you to pray for me at end),  
 To the Almighty Lord my spirit I commend.

The flies (unto these words) no word could  
     speak,  
 But yielded tears, like drops in April showers,  
 Saving in outcry, as they thence did break,

HEY. III.

C C

They cried, Farewell, of flies the flower of  
flowers. [hours;

But well the last hour hath no following  
The hour is come wherein the fly must die,  
For which he waiteth, at spider's foot pros-  
trately.



[*Nn.iv.r.*  
¶As the spider is about to kill the fly, the maid of the house cometh in and striketh down the cobweb and the spider to the ground. Cap. 89.

[*Nn.iv.v.*

THE spider toward the fly furiously draws,  
And being stepped to the fly, staying in  
stop [his paws,  
As he would have pierced the fly's head with  
The maid of the house to the window did chop,  
Setting her broom hard to the cobweb's top;  
Where, at one stroke with her broom stricken  
round, [ground.  
The cobweb and spider she struck to the  
[*The tail-piece as on p. 154 is here inserted in  
original.*]

[Oo.i.r.]

*The maid being at point to tread the spider to death, the spider prayeth her to hear him speak ere he die, and then to adjudge him justly, the maid granting to use him (as he did use the fly) as may best stand with reason, law, custom, and conscience. She at his request (for the time) withdrawing her foot, they fall to reasoning of the case.*

Cap. 90.



[Oo.i.v.]

**T**HE maid, by mine absence to be the more bold  
To work her will, as she came in, I went out,  
And looked in at the window, her to behold.

She swept down the cobweb ; the fly flew about  
 The parlour round, never more lusty nor stout ;  
 The spider on the ground, under the maid's  
 foot,

To tread him to death, and was about to do't.  
 But the spider (on knees) lift up his hands high,  
 Beseeching her, of mild maidenly pity,  
 To be content to hear him speak ere he die,  
 And to declare first what he had done, and then  
 why

He did those deeds, and so to judge him justly ;  
 And that she would (in meantime) her foot  
 withdraw, [stomach gnaw.

Sight whereof made his head ache, and his  
 To banish (quoth the maid) all partial pretence,  
 I'll hear and judge thee, as thou didst the fly  
 hear, [science,

As standeth with reason, law, custom, and con-  
 So shalt thou have good, bad, high, low, far  
 or near;

And since fear of my foot abateth thy cheer,  
 Lest thou might'st take harm, of thine own  
 conceit

That I withdraw. And so withdrew it straight.



[Oo.ii.r.]

*In reasoning of both sides, the maid driveth the spider to grant himself convinced (by custom aided with the other principles erst said) as he convinced and adjudged the fly before. Whereupon she (by custom) decreeth the spider to die, he then desiring to speak with his son and his council, which the maid granteth. Cap. 91.*



[Oo.ii.v.]

**F**AIR and good mistress, maidenly maid  
(quoth he)  
Leaving the brim to the bottom to wade,  
What deeds I have done here you have seen  
and see;

Which are the cobwebs in windows here made  
Of all spiders the natural trace to trade;  
Which to be impugned we never heard nor  
saw,  
In reason, custom, conscience, nor law.

Spider (quoth the maid) know ye that I heard  
All this day between you and the fly here said;  
Wherein I saw the cause wherefore ye jarred  
Was not for that the cobwebs here wrought  
and laid, [thus weighed:  
But for the place ye wrought them in as  
You to build in top and top-side, the fly held;  
You held the whole yours, in all places to  
build.

The fly held that all flies hold all holes in free-  
hold;  
You (for all spiders) held that freehold all yours.  
In reason, law, and custom, each to other told  
Your minds in this matter (at least) five long  
hours. [powers  
At end whereof, it passed both your wits and  
To take end yourselves, but were driven to  
devise  
Arbiters, to take an end by compromise.

Which matter, as both sides writhed it and  
wound it,  
Your arbiters there, the ant and butterfly,  
Were driven to leave it at large as they  
found it.  
Whereupon ye finally burdenously  
Burdened the fly with custom, thereby to die.  
Which he could not deny, and for his defence,  
He got the case to be reasoned in conscience.

[Oo.iii.7.]

Wherein (by nature in you and reason in man),  
 Ye set a discourse, reasonably sounding,  
 With reason and conscience that custom to  
 scan.

Whereupon appeared infallible grounding  
 To bring the fly justly to his confounding.  
 And had not been your usurping in this place,  
 Conscience with custom had stand in this case.

Custom granteth, and conscience not denieth,  
 Disturbing your cobwebs wrought in top post,  
 The fly (for th'offence) accustomable dieth.  
 But cobwebs upon cobwebs, purled in each cost,  
 All parts of windows to be so embossed  
 That no fly can pass without death's interrup-  
 tion,

Conscience construeth that custom corruption.

In taking the fly's part here, I take mine own ;  
 I being maid of the house, my charge it is  
 To see cobwebs corrected, thus overgrown,  
 And so will I do, spider, be sure of this.  
 Well (quoth the spider, if I have done amiss,  
 Redress mine ill doing, and let me go free.  
 Nay, nay, spider (quoth the maid) that may  
 not be.

Swept I these superfluous cobwebs now hence,  
 Letting thee pass in this window to remain,  
 Custom hath so corrupted thy conscience,  
 That where is now one cobweb, there should  
 be twain. [plain]

Well (quoth he) since ye like not (as appeareth  
 What I have done, yet hear why I have done it,  
 Which shall (I hope) appease your ire every  
 whit.

[Oo.iii.v.

The why (or wherefore) I did that I have done,  
 Was that flies (beyond number) did here resort,  
 Blowing meat here (raw and roast) beyond the  
 mone. [speech short

Which wrought your master and mistress in  
 To rebuke you sore, to your deep discomfort.  
 Which to redress, I, in pitying of you,  
 Set nets to catch flies, as I do now.

Here is (quoth the maid) one truth told, and  
 one lie. [blown,

That flies have my meat here outrageously  
 That is truly said, and it for true grant I.

But that thou didst set nets here, all over-  
 grown, [own,

Aught for my pleasure, and not all for thine  
 That's a false tale, to which policy thee draws,  
 To win favour at my hands, clear without  
 cause.

But were it as true as it is false, yet thou  
 And thy family do me displeasure more  
 Then pleasure in this, for your nigh approach  
 now

Is to my master and mistress an eyesore  
 Above the flies blowing by degrees a score.

They both loathe less to have, be it flesh or fish,  
 Ten flies in their meat, than one spider in their  
 dish.

And in their dish wouldst thou and thine surely  
 be,

If I (rather too late than in time due)  
 Took thee not up, as is my charge in duty

Executing mine office, did I eschew  
 To correct such pride in thee as never grew  
 In spider erst, than my master and mistress  
 Of my rebuke had just cause of increase.

[Oo.iv.r.]

And hadst thou been never so serviceable  
 In doing thy duty in many things right,  
 Yet this thy usurpation abominable,  
 Hath drowned thy thank of those due done  
 deeds quite,

Which is to be witnessed, in all the world's  
 sight. [weighed]

All reasons in law, custom, and conscience  
 Against the fly, are now against thyself laid.

And as thou madest custom thy sheet-anchor  
 chief, [science],  
 (Conjoining thereto reason, law, and con-  
 Of the fly's death (by right) to make perfect  
 preef

From first age of the world had in consequence;  
 So bring I custom, fetched like far time from  
 hence. [brain,

Custom is thy warrant to suck the fly's  
 Whereto mark how custom warranteth me  
 again.

From the beginning it is th'accustomed guise,  
 When spiders in windows their cobwebs so  
 make

That they too far offend their beholder's eyes,  
 The maid of the house with her broom, at a  
 strake, [spiders take

Sweepeth down those cobwebs, and those  
 Under her foot, and for any intercess  
 Those spiders (with her foot) to death she doth  
 press.

Which custom is underpropped (as I said)  
 With reason, with law, and with conscience,  
     for me [laid.  
 As strongly in my case, as for thee in thine  
 Now speak, spider; canst thou deny this?  
     (quoth she)  
 Nay, forsooth, I cannot deny it (quoth he),  
 But am driven to grant it, and even so I do.  
 Your merciful hands I commit me into.

[Oo.iv.v.]

Thou shalt have (quoth she) mercy even as  
     much [thine.  
 At my hands, as the fly should have had at  
 Cast off all vain hope, since thy fortune is such,  
 Thyself framing fortune to thy this ruin.  
 Make patience thy salve for this sore, in fine;  
 And make thee ready, spider, for finally  
 I assuredly assure thee thou shalt die.

The change of his cheer at these words made  
     me see [make.  
 How the dread of death could lambs of lions  
 This lionlike spider, erst fierce as could be,  
 Fear did all his fury full far then aslacke.  
 His heart in a pursenet was easy to take.  
 Change (by chance) brought him at twinkle of  
     an eye,  
 From twig top of the tree, at the root to lie.

These two things are meet things (as me-  
     thinketh) to note—  
 The spider right now so high, even now so low;  
 The fly right now at ebb, even now afloat,

The trump of his fame never so high did blow  
Th'other's trump of shame, as high in sound  
doth show. [blew this blast :  
Which blasts of which trumps (in mine ear)  
Fickle fortune will never leave her old cast.

But to the matter : the spider prayed the maid  
To speak with his son and heir before he died,  
And with his counsel. She was content (she  
said)

Chance being messenger, chance thither  
straight hied [side.  
His son and twelve counsellors hard by his  
Whereupon he there and then discoursed his  
mind,  
In matter such as ye next this may find.

[Pp.i.r.]

The spider to his son and twelve spiders giveth his best advice for most quiet and best governance, his tale standing most upon these three terms,—first, a declaration of himself; second, an exhortation to them; the third, a submission for himself, whereunto he desireth licence to take his child in his arms, now at their departing, which the maid granteth.

Cap. 92.



[Pp.i.v.]

MY dear child, my near friends, and counsellors late,  
My short time not allowing long talk with you,  
When I would most long and most deeply debate

Mine estate past and present with you all now;  
My talk most short and thereby most slight  
t'allow,

I must, and (since I must) will devise to tell,  
Charging my child, and praying you, to weigh  
it well.

This short tale, shortened by short time (as I  
say),

For a ground of firm framed foundation,  
Upon these three principles I will here lay.  
The first, of myself, a declaration;  
The second, to you, an exhortation;  
The third, for myself, a submission  
For remission of my ill condition.

First, I declare and confess my former life,  
Chief in time and place of mine authority,  
To wring to the worse (by right or wrong in  
strife)

All flies or spiders that would stand against me.  
Their destruction was my felicity;  
My displeasure, as I used it in quarrel,  
Was as judgment of death, or deathlike peril.

Mine ambitious desire, here to declare :  
In winning in windows, no one so nigh all  
(Which I might have kept quietly to my share).  
When my winning was most, I thought it too  
small.

The shooting at all was my mark principal;  
And now, shooting at all, I have lost all quite.  
The mean is the merry part, being sung right,

And of the two extreme parts (as I take it)  
The base is better than the treble to sing.  
Treble prosperity, reason doth make it

[Pp.ii.1.]

Worse than base adversity, it approving  
In the fly's bass and my treble state erst mov-  
ing.

Prosperity, (as that fly said) maketh us blind;  
Adversity, (I feel) giveth sight by kind.

When I had all that could well-nigh be got,  
Restraint of liberty had been my hell pain;  
Now I have naught, I were content with lot  
To sit and beg, fast locked in a chain;  
I never to obtain more estate or gain,  
But only life and living, such as would  
Maintain a beggar's life, basely to hold.

But life, liberty, lands and all, must I lose,  
And I confess me to lose all worthily;  
Every wight is worthy to have as he does.  
Lands, life, and goods of many flies had have I,  
And now must I leave life, lands, and goods,  
semblably.

This long-learned lesson I late had forgotten;  
Our measures meet to other, shall to us be  
motten.

But in this measure, hear me measure right  
How wrong judges, wrong judgments in this  
text lay.

Some expound it so largely, that in their sight  
Where authorised judges punishment weigh,  
Measuring harm to harm doers th'ill to stay,  
If any ill come to those judges eft soon  
That judge th'ill to be done, for th'ill to them  
done.

[Pp.ii.v.

But those judgments grow of this condition :  
Malice arrogant, or ignorance insolent,  
Mothers of erroneous exposition.

This text hath a limit: how far it hath bent  
 Such harms as chance judges, or such as assent  
 To procure punishment to such as are nought,  
 Those harms unto them for that are not  
 wrought.

Judgments of the great God are secret, we  
 know:

A judge using justice, of just true dealing,  
 The God may punish, for other things that  
 grow, [vealing)  
 Which he knoweth, and we know not (by re-  
 And oftentimes the good, their glory ensealing:  
 He punisheth some here, as standeth with his  
 will,

Whose measures he knoweth, (of man's  
 measures) least ill.

But for such false measurers as I have been,  
 This measure is made, and duly put in ure,  
 At hands of the great God, oft directly seen,  
 Right measure meting, for wrong meting  
 measure. [cure

And (ofttimes) he doth his instruments pro-  
 As now this maid right measurer to me is,  
 As I to other have measured wrong ere this.

This declaration, one part of these three,  
 What I have partly been, hath made you hear  
 Whereby what case I am in, here you see.  
 Which sight and hearing may be mirror clear  
 To look in all times of the day and the year,  
 For spiders high and spiders underneath  
 To keep with life, that I have lost with death.

And so to do, I shall you all exhort.

And first, my son, mark mine advice to thee,  
(That shall succeed me straight in place of  
such port,

As I first began in superiority)

In few words, which smart shall time limiteth  
me.

For the which while, my child to me most dear,  
Thy weeping leave, and lay thine ear to hear.

Those things that thou hast heard me here  
declare,

By which thou seest thy father cast away,  
To save thyself (my child) see thou prepare  
To flee the same by temperate steady stay.

The contrary of my demeanour aye

Shall aye defend thee so in every case,

As thou, both loved and dread, shall keep thy  
place.

Against my subtlety, use thou simplicity;  
Against my wrong usurping, use thou right;  
Against my pride, use thou humility;  
Against my wrath, use charity in sight;  
Against my hate, in love have thou delight.  
Against these ills, and other following me,  
Note these next ills, not to follow, but to flee.

Where truth is taken treason, and traitors in  
trust : [faith :

Where faith is framed fancy, and fancy feigned

Where losels over lords lay laws at their lust :

Where witless as wisest the witty outweigh'th :

Where mercy to the meek mere malice dis-  
may'th :

Where dawcocks in doctrine have domination,  
There doth division bring desolation.

[Pp.iii.v.]

Let truth be the badge, in whom thou trust  
dost take;  
Let not firm faith be left for fickle fancy;  
Let ruled lords rule ruleless losels, when they  
crake;  
Let wise wisdom overweigh witless folly;  
Let malice pass, use measurable mercy;  
Let th'unlearned in doctrine to the learned give  
place;  
Let pastors be placed, as I place them in case.

In place of a shepherd, place not a sheep;  
In place of a sheep, place not a shepherd;  
In no place place a wolf, the flock to keep,  
The sheep or the wolf to the shepherd's place  
preferred; [marred.  
By faintness or fierceness the flocks must be  
Place thou thy shepherds such shepherds to be,  
As from the sheep and wolf, use the mean  
decree.

Offenders penitent (for offences passed,  
Saving of whom offendeth not the standing  
state,  
Nor encourageth other to offend the more fast)  
Correct, as mercy may rigour moderate.  
But to this make this a ground inviolate,—  
Upon sturdy stiff standers in violency,  
Draw thy sword of justice, sharpened sharply.

And mark (my son) these points that I now  
come to,  
In common order, of thy governing.  
Who honestly doth, as other honest do,

And faith as those honest say, or saith nothing,  
Ask him not what he thinketh, for mark this  
o'thing :

Whose deed and his thought repugnantly  
vary,

His word and his thought jar likewise contrary.  
[Pp.iv.r.]

Love to be loved, and hate to be hated  
Of those that love good and hate ill ; otherwise,  
Having hate of th'ill, for justice justly rated,  
Hate so be thou glad to have, and by justice  
Continue that hate in incessant size.

In whom (by their faults) to thee faultless it  
draws

To continue by their continued cause.

Touching right or wrong, of both must thou  
choose one,

As thus : either to do wrong, or to take wrong ;  
Rather take it than do it ; see thou do none.

The wrong that I have done (the flies here  
among)

Of mine ill, their ill hath been partly along.

Answer mine ill all (alas) straight must I do,  
And as much of theirs as mine hath forced  
them to.

Of spider or fly sued to for aught in grant,  
Ere thou grant, look what, where, and why  
thou grantest it ;

But grants once passed thee (at suitors' suites  
instant),

Perform them full, without restraint any whit.

Performance of promise perfectly doth knit

Such credence to all (they performing the same)  
As winneth them fast friendship and perpetual  
fame.

Thy counsel choose, in these conditions bent,—  
 Few, wise, secret, expert, temperate, and true,  
 Satisfied with sufficiency, and diligent  
 All sale of justice and all offers t'eschew  
 That shall to thee or commonwealth hindrance  
 brew ;  
 Their taking whereof, seeming winning to be,  
 May lose them with all theirs, and all thine  
 with thee.

[Pp.iv.v.]

Here have I given thee, son, such exhortation  
 As weak wit and short time will suffer in me ;  
 Which if thou use at thy father's contempla-  
 tion,  
 Behold then (my son) thine own prosperity.  
 If not, behold thy father's adversity  
 As rightly and rightfully on thee to light,  
 As on thy father, thou seest it now light right.

Now to you of his counsel, mark what I devise.  
 In you, lieth the putting in ure of all this ;  
 You are his hands, his feet, his ears, and his  
 eyes ;  
 Hearing, feeling, or seeing, in him small is  
 To walk or to work with, you working amiss.  
 You are the mirrors that all lookers look in ;  
 As you work, they work, but you must first  
 begin.

In which work, this walk, I exhort you to  
 take  
 Walk in amity, work in unity.  
 The answer of suitors, expedite make ;  
 Search their subjections, how they may agree  
 To be granted, with honourable honesty.  
 Offenders against you, when ye will challenge,  
 Never draw his sword your quarrels to revenge.

These be the great grounds presently brought  
in mind,

They passing two parts of my promised three.  
Me to declare, you to exhort, in such kind  
As may show cause of repentance in me  
For ills past, and for th'ills to come in ye  
Warning to avoid. Thirdly and lastly now,  
To witness my submission, I shall pray you.

[*Qq.i.r.*]

First to the great God I humbly and wholly  
Submit me, even so beseeching his mercy  
For all my great sin and all offensive folly  
Against him committed. Secondarily,  
Of all the whole world here I generally,  
Ask forgiveness, where and in what mine of-  
fence

To crave forgiveness chargeth my conscience.

Thirdly (and specially), good mistress maid,  
Your displeasure toward me to bring appeased,  
I pray your benignity to be displayed  
To forgive my guilt, which hath you displeased,  
And not only displeased, but diseased;  
Namely, now in straining your arms long and  
small,

To cleanse your window of uncomely cobwebs  
all.

Fourthly and finally, remission sought,  
By submission, to all spiders and flies  
That I in this window have offended aught,  
In taking or giving the holes in such size,  
Or stretched my cobwebs here in such wide  
wise

As straitened any part of their lawful right;  
Of them, on knees, I pray forgiveness in sight.

Here end I, saving six words here to be said  
Unto my child ; I, (him in mine arms having)  
Pronounced in your hearing (good mistress  
maid)

Your licence whereto is mine humble craving,  
Without word of any ill in depraving.  
Content (quoth she); wherewith in arms he  
took him,  
Saying these words, while she did overlook  
him.

[Qq.i.v.]

¶After a few woeful words of the spider had to his son (they both clasping each other in arms very naturally) he kisseth and blesseth him. Wherewith that son, with all the twelve spiders, dolefully depart from the spider.

Cap. 93.



[Qq.ii.r.]

O H deep desired sight, of thee my child dear,  
Behold thy father, how he beholdeth thee !  
To thy mother, and brother, thou shalt appear,

After this weeping time, worn out of you three,  
To your comforts ofttimes, but no time more  
to me.

Our departings differ ; nothing more unneath  
You from me to life, I from you to death.

Now here in sight, as I should never be hence,  
Straight hence from sight, as I had never been  
here.

Well, farewell ; use to thy mother obedience ;  
To thy brother, let brotherly love appear ;  
Commend me to them both (my jewels dear).  
I bless thee ; kiss thou me. They did so, and so  
Loathly he loosed his arms, and let him go.



[Qq.ii.v.]

**T**he maid (appearing as woe to destroy the spider as he is to be destroyed) with her foot presseth him to death.

Cap. 94.



[Qq.iii.r.]

**T**HE water ran down the cheeks of them both two;  
The maid, pitying both, wept as fast they;  
But for that she must do more than she would do,

The spider had been forgiven, and gone his way.

But they gone weeping away, without delay,  
The spider lying prostrate, she thereupon,  
Setting her foot on him, he was forthwith gone.



[Qq.iii.v.]

The maid hath before her the twelve spiders and the twelve flies that had been before in place. And upon her show that all harms done by those generations is grown by misorder, she finally deviseth full redress in pointing them to grow to order.

Cap. 95.



[Qq.iv.r.]

UPON this execution done, she hath now Before her these twelve spiders with those twelve flies That erst were there, they erst mentioned to you;

Unto which number she did there devise  
Certain precepts given in words weighty and  
wise,

Which to repeat, as rightly as I can,  
I will; and in this wise her tale began.

To train the time and tarry you (quoth she)  
In talk of your forefaults, folly it were.  
The smart both doth and will still tell it ye.  
But what thing brought that smart, each when  
and where?

That here to hear, each one lay to his ear;  
Which thing briefly to tell, brief end to forder,  
Was only in you all this thing—misorder.

As God orderly created creatures all,  
So were they created, to orderly intent,  
To use themselves, each creature in his call.  
Of which created sort the creator meant  
Spiders and flies twain, to order to relent.  
The lack whereof on your sides witnesseth well,  
To have wrought displeasure on all sides every-  
deal.

On all sides I say, meaning these sides thereby  
Your sides, my side, my master and master's  
side. [ingly;

First for your sides, the smart sheweth feel-  
On my side, such rebukes as I abide  
Of them for you, seeming your faults to hide;  
And on their sides their most unpleasant sight,  
To see spiders and flies out of order quite.

[Qq. iv. v.  
Spiders spinning in windows well-nigh in their  
faces

Spitefully have spun, and flies innumerably  
To blow their meat have made their common  
traces;

Thus lack of order on your two sides prove I  
 To have brought all sides to live unpleasantly,  
 To my master's and mistress's grief, greatly  
     grown    [own.  
 Whose which grief to me is more than mine

By whose appointment under them as now,  
 I (having here the cure), must have the care  
 To assign redress, for which I sent for you,  
 To you and to all yours in you, to declare  
 Order, to ease all spiders and flies that are,  
 And all other such as have been annoyed  
 By lack of order which ye ere this destroyed.

That spiders and flies are the creatures of God,  
 And all his creatures in their creation good,  
 I know and acknowledge, or else God's forbode.  
 I hate neither the spiders' nor the flies' brood ;  
 I love all, as behoveth maidenly mood.  
 All his creatures in an order we must love,  
 That orderly use themselves as doth behove.

And such as be ill, yet may we not hate  
 The persons, but the ill in the persons seen.  
 This learned I of a preacher that preached late :  
 And of myself (I thank God) I have not been  
 So much given to hate (any person I mean,  
 Be they spiders, be they flies, whatever they be)  
 But I can use all, as standeth with charity.

[Rr.i.r.]

And charitably such an order to set  
 To set you in rest, and the said rest thereby  
 All faults in all past to forgive and forget,

That will I you all to do, and orderly  
 Each one to use himself ordinarily,  
 And each use other in every kind of cause,  
 As th'old known well-ordered custom duly  
 draws.

And that is this : ye spiders in tip of top,  
 Or in top-sides of windows, cobwebs shall  
 make, [crop  
 Above the reach of my broom to crush or  
 Any part thereof, not set like an ale stake,  
 Proudly to brag yourselves and bring flies in  
 brake,  
 But in place to lie most high and most hidden ;  
 Spiders thus placed, custom's order hath  
 bidden.

Flies in the body of the window shall pass,  
 Not by thousands at once, seditiously,  
 But through holes of lattice or broken glass ;  
 Not blowing henceforth (so saucemalapertly)  
 My master's and mistress's meat, as years  
 lately  
 They have done, but pass and repass in number  
 And usage such as shall no house accumber.

This ancient order, in few words here given,  
 Is all that I ask in you to be used ;  
 In lack whereof, in all sorrow you are driven ;  
 In use thereof, in solace you inclused.  
 Misorder bringing you thus confused,  
 Let order, by your leaving of disorder,  
 Quietness on your sides and all sides forder.

[Rr.i.v.]  
 By order (from disorder) you to redeem  
 (From sorrows of all sorts to solace so sorted),  
 Is cause of my coming, not by means extreme,

But by most mild means that may be imported  
 In order to set you and see you comforted  
 To keep order. Wherein you obeying me,  
 We may live in love all, each in his degree.

Each in his degree (I say) mark that point well;  
 Your lack of living so, ye see, marred you all.  
 Chiefly you spiders, usurping to excel  
 In governance, out of your place natural;  
 Which for few years past brought and kept  
     flies so thrall,                                  [agree  
 That you (well nigh) brought flies to grant to  
 You as head governor general be.

In which usurpation ye offended  
 Nature, reason, my master, mistress, and me.  
 Governors, nature hath commonly bended  
 Over such kinds to govern as themselves be;  
 Beast over beasts, fowl over fowls, as we see  
 Man over men, and in fear and awe is then  
 Th'unreasonable beast to reasonable man.

Nature ye offend, in planted plain proof here,  
 To take rule of other kinds than your kind is;  
 Reason ye offend, in that ye here appear  
 To take upon you the use of mine office;  
 Me ye offend in the same, and unto this  
 My master and mistress ye offend, as thus,—  
 Head rule here is their gift by custom's discuss.

[Rr.ii.7.]

But leave this, and take that, mine order erst  
     told;  
 Keep you your places, and let me keep mine,  
 As nature and custom willett you of old,

While reason and custom do me clear incline  
My master's and mistress's will to work in fine;  
As I under them, and you under me,  
May lovely live (I say) each in due degree.

The spiders and flies, perceiving by her stay  
That she in this matter had said what she  
would,  
All rejoicing, one spider assigned to say,  
In such manner as good manner might him  
bold,  
This effect in these words, to this maid he told;  
At beginning of whose talk she set her eye,  
And laid her ear toward him diligently.



[Rr.ii.v.]  
 ¶The twelve spiders and twelve flies, having  
 heard their order set by the maid, they thank-  
 fully receive it. And upon her commandment  
 to them, to put this order in ure among all  
 spiders and flies, they joyfully depart that com-  
 mandment to fulfil.

Cap. 96.



[Rr.iii.r.]  
 MOST excellent maid and mistress of ours,  
 Your mild and motherly precepts given  
 us thus  
 In order old, revived now at hand of yours,  
 HEY III.

E E

Lack whereof (as ye said) the sorrows in us  
Have witnessed that of them the cause in dis-  
cuss ; [felt,  
Your words wherein told to our deeds therein  
Do instruct us, with a double witness dealt.

And double or treble (yea, quadruple) cause,  
With many causes more than I can now tell,  
Have we to keep order as your will us draws ;  
Spiders and flies have lived like as in hell,  
Since new disorder did th'old order expel.  
Thus our bound duty obeying your precept,  
Is your pleasure, but our profit, to see kept.

Which I promise for us, and all spiders else,  
To be observed as farforth as we may.  
And I (quoth one fly) for all flies as he tells,  
Promise for order to walk the same way,  
Rejoicing all that ever we saw this day ;  
Praying the great God for you now and ever  
In prosperous prosperity to persevere.

Well, friends (quoth the maid) to enter order  
now,  
Depart, and plant this in all spiders and flies ;  
In top of windows, spiders, exercise you,  
And flies, the holes moderately exercise.  
In most joyful joy, that both sorts can devise,  
From thence most joyfully they all flang and  
flew, [ensue.  
While the maid used her will there, as doth

[Rr.iii.v.]

The spiders and flies being now absent, the maid sweepeth the window clean in every place, as far as her broom and arm will stretch. Which done, she departeth.

Cap. 97.



[Rr.iv.r.]

THE spiders and flies (for the time) being gone,  
The maid swept that window clean in all places ;  
In all corners that her broom might light upon

Each cobweb (with her broom) she full defaces.  
No wem seen in casements, nor casement cases  
Upon her clear cleansing whereof. Out went  
she,  
And in came I, her workmanship there to see.



[Rr.iv.v.]

The maid being gone, the author cometh in.  
And upon his beholding the window fair and  
clean swept, without any cumbrous cobwebs or  
excessive flocks of flies, he departeth. Cap. 98.



[Ss.i.r.]

B EHOLDING the window, seeing every room  
Clean and empty, save three flies amid that plat,  
And in the top (without reach of the maid's broom)

Corners of cobwebs unneth seen, and to that  
All things in quiet case, so that I could not  
Of any matter be any further winner,  
I went from the window, to the board to  
dinner.

FINIS.



# The conclusion with an exposition of the Author touching one piece of the latter part of this parable.

I HAVE, good readers, this parable here  
penned,

After old beginning newly brought to end.  
The thing, years more than twenty since it  
begun, [done.]

To the thing years more than nineteen, nothing  
The fruit was green; I durst not gather it then,  
For fear of rotting before riping began.

The loss (it on the fruiterer's hand lying)  
Had (in that mystery) marred his occupying.

This work (among my poor works) thus hath  
it passed,—

Begun with the first, and ended with the last.  
At end whereof (as at beginning) I pray  
All readers that read it (in all that we may)  
Each one reader to scan this parable so  
As our most scanning diligently may go  
In speech of spiders' and flies' faults, here  
shown,

To considerate weighing of faults of our own,  
And them (by grace) t'amend, for concord  
growing,

As spiders and flies grow to, here in showing.  
But, faults and faulters, erst repented and past,  
Which faults (I hope) none on himself can now  
cast,

Figured here in the spider's cruelty,  
Touching deeds and deaths of those that so  
passed be,

Let us rather (when memory them to mind calls),  
 Lament their false facts than rejoice their foul falls;  
 And pray for them, as we hope they pray for us,  
 That they and we, by God's merciful discuss,  
 May (after strife together in life carnal),  
 Live and love together in life eternal.

[Ss.ii.r.]

And for the chief spider and fly understand,  
 Spider that died and fly that 'scaped at maid's hand,

As in that figure both most charitably,  
 Th'one indeed dying, th'other ready to die,  
 So should we not only die, but also live  
 As God's precepts (pain of endless death) do give.

Ye see also that this figure here implies,  
 For strife in windows between spiders and flies,  
 The <sup>þ</sup>plat of all the world, and people therein.  
 In which world which people, if all now begin,  
 And henceforth endeavour them during their lives,

By counsel of those two to cut off all strives  
 By cutting off all cause of strife in all parties,  
 As they both (each in his last tale) did devise.  
 The first tale, in chapter fourscore and eight  
 here, [appear

The second, in fourscore and twelve doth  
 Th'advice in both turned to, it to hear and hold:  
 Turning their persons to ours (in those tales told), [fruit

Then shall we first see, and after feel, what  
 Our right doing (against wrong) shall execute.  
 Which, since ye may turn and behold as a glass,  
 Tedious iteration thereof I let pass.

As I (for tediousness and other causes),  
 Omit (to remit) the number of clauses  
 To those, learned and given (in interpretation),  
 More them am I, unto moralisation.  
 I leave to the learned the core of this matter ;  
 Howbeit (as I can) I crave leave to smatter  
 In uttering my fancy, under submission,  
 Touching the taking of one exposition.

[Ss.ii.v.]

In one piece hereof one sense t'interpretate,  
 Of apt application to sense literate  
 In this the last said part of this said figure.  
 That maid, I mean, putting her office in ure,  
 Sweeping down cobwebs in every border,  
 That she (in that window) saw set out of order,  
 Setting all flies at their lawful liberty,  
 And spiders also, t'avoid all jeopardy.  
 They building in windows, without her broom's  
     reach, [breach]  
 (Where building within it brought much of this  
 Keeping themselves within their bounds, as  
     they ought, [thought].  
 Harm she none did them, none said, nor none  
 But spiders, having past their bounds, (as they  
     had), [bad],  
 And flies having flown more broad than order  
 Th'one too nigh her master's and mistress's eye  
     showing ;  
 Th'other her master's and mistress's meat  
     blowing ;  
 She thought it her duty, it being her charge,  
 To do some execution for warning large  
 Both to spiders and flies, the flocks every one,  
 By executing of spiders only one.  
 And, save custom of justice forced her thereto,  
 Loath was she execution on him to do.

Her broom not sword of rigour, (double edged  
blade) [made.  
But the branch of mercy that mild maiden  
Finally, upon her benign behaviour,  
Appeasing all this fury with all this favour  
In spiders and flies without stripes to stint  
strife, [life,  
All placed in right place to place prosperous  
Each one in himself, in most joyful joy joyed,  
And each one to other, their joys they em-  
ployed.

[Ss.iii.r.]

All joying in her as their redemption  
Of rest, long erst had in exemption.  
All bent (as all were bound) in all that they  
may,  
That maid (in her office) to love and obey.  
Wherewith, as this parable here taketh end,  
So I (with a few words therein) an end intend.  
Of this last piece plain interpretation,  
Lighteth in the lap of imagination.  
Which, of force, in weighing the sense literal,  
Clearly conveyeth the sense allegorical  
To our sovereign Lady, Queen Mary, and maid.  
At God's bringing whom to her crown, may be  
laid  
Our like strife risen, and more than like to rise  
Than sheweth here risen between spiders and  
flies. [filth clean,  
Whose sword, like a broom that sweepeth out  
Not a sword that filleth the house by bloody  
mean,  
This merciful maiden took in hand to sweep  
Her window, this realm, not to kill, but to  
keep  
All in quiet, on her bringing us thereto,

As that maid all spiders and flies showeth to do.

And as under that maid spider died but one,  
So under this maid, save one, (in effect) none.  
And as that one under that one maid did die  
Repentant, so this other repentantly,  
Under this other maid, the death meekly took.  
All sin'with all sinful errors, he forsook,  
Of God craving forgiveness principally,  
And then of the world, and most specially  
Of this maid his mistress, who (clearly) him forgave,

As that maid did that spider, when he did crave.

[Ss.iii.v.

And as that maid, loathly forced by just custom,  
Was driven to bring that one t'execution to come,  
So this maid, save like that maid, by force  
was driven,

Was with that maid (for pity) more than even;  
And as that maiden's most quarrel was adict

For that spiders and flies in that window kicked  
Against the will of her master and mistress,  
So did this maid her chief quarrel address  
To us (or to such of us) as the precept  
Of her master and mistress had not kept.  
And as that maid took those faults much more  
to heart

In respect of her master's and mistress's part  
Than for her own part (her part being not small,

In that the redress she was charged withal),  
So under her master and mistress, this maid,  
Being their like instrument to see things  
weighed

She weighed that with more grief to see them  
offended [pended.

Than for aught that on her own part de-  
Her master Christ, the head master principal,  
Her mistress, mother holy church catholical.  
And as that one maid, with that one stroke of  
her broom,

Cleansed her window clear in every room,  
Setting flies at liberty in their right rate,  
Placing spiders likewise in accustomed state,  
Pointing both parties path of direct direction  
To trace and tread in as wealth's protection ;  
So this one maid, with this one stroke of her  
sword, [board,

From long thrall thraldom hath set us clear a  
Pointing us our places (and paths) of old  
known,

Great guides both to ghostly and worldly  
wealth grown.

[Ss.iv.1.

Thus far goeth this figure, and this exposition  
Between that maid and this maid, the condi-  
tion

On her part fulfilled. Whereupon let us here  
Play our parts in this part all parts to appear.  
To this maid, as spiders and flies to that maid,  
Let our banners of obedience be displayed  
Of love, the badge of rejoicing, the right root,  
And of our own wealth the right and full boot.  
Love we her, and obey we her, as we ought,  
And also our sovereign Lord Philip, to her  
brought [twain,

By God, as God brought her to us. Which  
Conjoined one in matrimonial train,  
But one also in authority regal,  
These two thus made one both one here we call,

Which two thus one, rejoice we every one.  
And these two thus one, obey we all as one  
Effectually, as those spiders and flies  
Figuratively that one recognise.  
Beseeching God that brought them, to keep  
them here [mere  
In long prosperous reign, and of his mercy  
So to bless us that on this blessed stock,  
He bring such imps as over their faithful flock  
As their progenitors do reign presently,  
They (after them) may reign perpetually.  
And for gift of these two thus one to us given,  
To yield the Three and One thanks, as we are  
driven.  
And also them, conclude we this even thus :  
Thank we God for them, and God and them  
for us.

FINIS.

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## OF GENTLENESS AND NOBILITY

*A Dialogue between the Merchant, the Knight, and the Ploughman, disputing who is a very Gentleman, and who is a Nobleman, and how men should come to authority. Compiled in manner of an Interlude, with divers toys and jests added thereto to make merry pastime and disport.*

[*This Dialogue has been attributed to John Heywood, and as it is not otherwise accessible it is given in this collected edition of John Heywood's writings, without prejudice.*]



[A.i.r.

## OF GENTLENESS AND NOBILITY

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*The Merchant.* O what a great wealth and prosperity

It is to any realm where merchants be,  
Having free liberty and intercourse also  
All merchandise to convey to and fro;  
Which thing I have used, and the veryfeat  
found,

And thereby gotten many a thousand pound.  
Wherfore now, because of my great riches,  
Throughout this land in every place doubtless  
I am magnified and greatly regarded,  
And for a wise and noble man esteemed.

*The Knight.* Master Merchant, I hear you  
right well;

But now in presumption methink ye excel,  
To call yourself noble in presence here.  
I wis men know what your ancestors were,  
And of what great stock descended ye be;

Your father was but a blacksmith, pardy.

*Mer.* Why, sir, what then? What be you,  
I pray you?

*Knight.* Marry, I am a gentleman, I would  
ye know,

And may dispend yearly five hundred mark  
land,

And I am sure all that ye have in hand  
Of yearly rent is not worth five marks.

*Mer.* But I would thou knewest, for all thy  
cracks,

I am able to buy now all the land  
That thou hast, and pay for it out of hand,

[A.i.v.]

Which I have got by mine own labour and wit.

*Knight.* Yet art thou but a churl, and I  
have a scorn

Thou shouldest compare with me, a gentleman  
born.

*Mer.* Why, what callest thou a gentleman?  
Tell me.

*Knight.* Marry, I call them gentlemen that  
be

Born to great lands by inheritance,  
As mine ancestors, by continuance,  
Have had this five hundred years, of whom  
now I

Am descended and come lineally,  
Bearing the same name and arms also  
That they bare this five hundred years ago.

Mine ancestors also have ever been  
Lords, knights, and in great authority,

Captains in the war and governors,  
And also in time of peace great rulers;

And thine were never but artificers,

As smiths, masons, carpenters, or weavers.

*Mer.* All that is truth, I will not deny now ;  
 Yet I am more gentleman born than thou,  
 For I call him a gentleman that gently  
 Doth give unto other men lovingly  
 Such thing as he hath of his own proper ;  
 But he that taketh aught away from another,  
 And doth give nothing again therefor,  
 Ought to be called a churl evermore.  
 But mine ancestors have given alway  
 To thine ancestors such thing as they  
 By their labours did truly get and win ;  
 For mine ancestors builded houses, wherein  
 Thine ancestors have had their dwelling-place ;  
 Also mine ancestors have made tools  
 To all manner crafty men belonging,  
 Whereby clothes, and every other thing,  
 Whereof thine ancestors need have had,  
 With the same tools have ever been made ;  
 So mine ancestors have given their labours  
 Ever to comfort and help thine ancestors.

*Knight.* I deny that ever th' ancestors of  
 thine  
 Did ever give to the ancestors of mine  
 At any time anything, except that they  
 Gave somewhat therefor, either ware or money.

*Mer.* Marry, God-a-mercy, John, for that  
 now ;  
 That is even a pig of our own sow.

[A.ii.r.]

How can lords and estates have aught in store  
 Except th' artificers do get it before ?  
 For all metals be digged first by mines,  
 And after wrought by the artificers.  
 Wool, fell, and every other thing  
 That is necessary to man's covering ;  
 And all other things that men use and wear,

Is alway made by the artifcer.

*Knight.* I grant that the artificers do make it,

But because commonly they have little wit,  
Gentlemen that have lands and dominion,  
Of all such riches have most possession;  
For reason will ever it should so be,  
Wise men to have fools in captivity.

*Mer.* Marry, as for wit and subtle invention,

[parison;

Mine ancestors with thine may make com-  
For though my father were a smith, what then?  
Yet was he a marvellous quick-witted man,  
And could work as well for his part  
As any in this land using that art,  
And devise new fashions in things that he  
made,

That every man to buy his ware was glad;  
And carved and graved in iron and steel  
Both image and letters marvellously well,  
And thereon lay gold and gild it also  
Fine and pure as any goldsmith could do.  
My grandfather also was a mason,  
Of great wit as any in this region,  
And could build a castle and tower right well,  
In which some of thy kinsmen now do dwell,  
Wherein appeareth right good masonry,  
With images and arms wrought curiously.  
My great-grandfather, lo, was a weaver,  
Of woollen yarn and of other gear,  
And made marvellous pleasant works to be-  
Linen, diaper, silk, and cloth of gold. [hold,  
All such subtle things as I have rehearsed, lo,  
Mine ancestors by their wits could work and  
do;  
And as for thine ancestors, I know nothing

They could do by their wits worth praising,  
But use, occupy, and waste evermore  
Such things as mine ancestors made before.  
And thou and thine ancestors having th'  
occupation

Of such things wrought by the operation

[A.ii.v.]

Of other men oughtest not to be praised there-  
for,

But the praise ought to be given evermore  
To the artificer which by his wit  
It devised, and so cunningly wrought it.  
Wherfore if thou say that wit and policy  
Be the things pertaining to gentry,  
Thine ancestors may never compare with mine,  
For their acts prove them wiser than thine;  
For thine did never no thing in their days  
Concerning quick wit that was worthy praise.

*Knight.* Yes, I wis, lewd javell, I would  
thou knewest it;

Mine ancestors have had more wisdom and wit  
Than thine have had, and could do also  
Many things that thine could never do;  
For in the country at sessions and 'size  
They have been elect to be justice,  
And for their wit and great discretion  
They have judged and done correction  
Upon thine ancestors' artificers  
That have made false wares and been de-  
ceivers,

And helped for to maintain everything  
That is to the commonwealth pertaining.  
They have been also, in time of war,  
Both in this land and other countries far,  
Dukes and leaders of the whole army,  
And by their wits and warlike policy,

Study, forecast, and diligent travel,  
 Have won many a great field and battle ;  
 And thine ancestors that were there  
 Were never able to bear shield nor spear,  
 And were never but soldiers and pioneers,  
 Nor never had wisdom to be rulers ;  
 But because mine ancestors have ever been  
 Discreet and wise, they have had authority.

*Mer.* Nay, nay, thine ancestors came never  
 all  
 To authority for wisdom principal ;  
 For though some were wise, yet some of them  
 again  
 Had small discretion, little wit or brain ;  
 But because of the long continuance  
 Of their great possessions by inheritance,  
 By the foolish manner of the world we see  
 For that cause ever they have had authority.

*Knight.* And I say that good reason  
 agreeth to it,  
 For though the father have no great wit,

[A.iii.r.]

The son that is wise should never the more  
 Lose his land or authority therefor ;  
 For he that by study, diligence, and pain  
 Great lands or possessions doth attain,  
 His own life is too short and too light  
 For to take the fruit of his merit ;  
 Reason would, therefore, that, after this life,  
 His heirs before strangers have prerogate use,  
 And the continuance of such possessions  
 Maketh noble men and gentle conditions ;  
 And they whose blood hath long continued,  
 As gentlemen so they should be honoured.  
 And so mine ancestors long time have been  
 Great possessioners and in authority.

Therefore, considering my great lineage  
By blood, my noble birth and parentage,  
Thou art not able to compare with me,  
Neither in gentleness nor in nobility.

*Here the ploughman cometh in with a  
short whip in his hand, and speaketh  
as followeth.*

*Plough.* Now, here is bubble-babble, clitter-clatter!

I heard never of so foolish a matter.  
But, by God's body, to speak the truth  
I am better than either of you both.

*Knight.* Avaunt, cankered churl! From whence comest thou?

*Plough.* Marry, foolish peevish daw, even from my plough.

Now say'st,—wouldest anything therewithal?

*Knight.* Yea, marry, thou lewd villain and rude rascal;

It is for the full ill beseeming,  
To perturb any gentlemen's talking.

*Plough.* Gentlemen? Ye gentlemen? Jack herring,

Put your shoon in your bosom for wearing;  
I account myself, by God's body,  
Better than you both and more worthy.

*Knight.* Avaunt, knave! get thee out of the gate,

Or I shall lay sword on thy pate.

*Plough.* That shall I prove, I make God avow,

Never in better time; have at thee now!

*Et verberat eos.*

*Mer.* Now hold thy hand, fellow, I thee pray,

And harken what I shall to thee say.

*Plough.* Say, knave, say? What canst say?

*Mer.* Hold thy hand, I pray thee; I come not near;

I am a merchant and no man of war.

*Knight.* Thou are not honest, I tell thee plainly,

To make any quarrel here so suddenly,  
To perturb our communication.

*Plough.* Here ye may see, sirs, by God's passion,

Two proud fools make a cracking,  
And when it cometh to point dare do nothing.

*Mer.* Our coming hither and our intent  
Is not to fight, but by way of argument,  
Every man to show his opinion,  
To see who could show the best reason  
To prove himself noble and most gentleman.

*Plough.* By God, all the reasons since ye began

That ye have made thereof be not worth a fly.

*Knight.* No, sir? I pray thee, then, tell me why.

*Plough.* First, as touching nobleness, I say  
There is neither of you both did prove or lay  
Any of your acts whereby that ye  
Should in reason prove you noble to be,  
Or thereby deserve any manner praising;  
But all the effect of your arguing  
To prove your nobleness was but only  
Of the deeds and acts of your ancestry,  
And of the acts that your ancestors did before;  
Ye are the nobler never the more.

*Knight.* As touching myself, I dare make comparison

[A.iii.v.]

Of as noble deeds as he hath any done;  
 For I am and have been one of the chivalry,  
 At the commandment of my prince ever ready,  
 And every time of war have been captain,  
 And leader of a thousand men or twain,  
 And with horse and harness, spear and shield,  
 Have jeopardied my body in every field,  
 The rents of my lands have spent liberally,  
 And kept a great house continually,  
 And helped to punish thieves and bribers alway,  
 To the great tranquillity of my country;  
 And you, Master Merchant, will never take  
 labour,

Except it be for your own profit and lucre.

*Plough.* Go to, go to, now, Master Merchant;

There is a reason that giveth you a taunt,  
 I trow, more than you can answer well.

*Mer.* Nay, I wis, peevish and rude Jack  
 javell,

I can make an answer so substantially  
 Whereto neither of you is able to reply.

[A.iv.r.]

*Knight.* If thou canst answer my reason,  
*Mer.* That can I well do. [do.]

*Plough.* Then go to, fool, go to!

*Mer.* I say the common weal of every land  
 Infeat of merchandise doth principally stand,  
 For if our commodities be uttered for naught  
 Into strange lands and no riches brought,  
 Hither therefore we should come to beggary,  
 And all men driven to live in misery.  
 Then we noble merchants that in this realm be,  
 What a great wealth to this land do we;  
 We utter our wares and buy theirs good cheap,  
 And bring them hither with great profit,

And pleasure daily cometh to this region  
 To all manner of people that here do won.  
 Furthermore, ye see well with your eyes  
 That of strange lands the commodities,  
 We have such need of them that be there,  
 That in no wise we may them forbear,  
 As oil, silk, fruits, and spices also,  
 Gold, silver, iron, and other metals more ;  
 All drams and drugs 'longing to physic,  
 Which men must needs have when they be  
 sick,

Which in this realm cannot well grow,  
 Our country is too cold and not hot, I know.  
 Without which things we should live in misery,  
 And oft-times for lack of them we should die.  
 And I spend my study and labour continually,  
 And cause such things to come hither daily,  
 For the comfort of this land and common-  
 wealth,  
 And to all the people great profit and  
 health.

And for such noble deeds reason will then  
 That I ought to be called a nobleman,  
 And neither of you both that here now be  
 In nobleness may accompare with me.

*Plough.* Now well hit ! by God's body, well  
 hit,

Of one that hath but little wit.

Answer me one word first, I pray thee ;  
 What is the noblest thing that can be ?

*Knight.* What sayest thou thereto thyself ?  
 Let's see.

*Plough.* Is not the noblest thing indeed  
 That of all other things hath least need ?  
 As God, which reigneth etern in bliss,  
 Is not he the noblest thing that is ?

*Knight.* Yes, marry, no man in reason can  
that deny.

*Plough.* Well, then, there is no reason  
thereof why,

But because he is the thing omnipotent,  
And is in himself so sufficient,  
And needeth the help of no other thing  
To the help of his glorious being,  
But every other thing hath need of his aid.

*Mer.* Marry, that is very true, and well  
said. [most need

*Plough.* And likewise that thing that hath  
Is the thing that is most wretched.

So sufficiency is ever nobleness,  
And necessity is ever wretchedness ;  
And he that hath more need of that thing  
For the preservation of his living  
Than his fellow hath, his fellow must needs be  
By this same reason more noble than he.

*Knight.* What then?

*Plough.* By the same reason it proveth, lo !  
Ye be but caitiffs and wretches both two ;  
And by the same reason prove I shall  
That I am the noblest man of us all ;  
For I have need of no manner of thing  
That ye can do to help of my living,  
For everything whereby ye do live  
I nourish it and to you both do give.  
I plough, I till, I stir the ground,  
Whereby I make the corn to abound,  
Whereof there is made both drink and bread,  
With the which daily ye must needs be fed.  
I nourish the cattle and fowls also,  
Fish, and herbs and other things more ;  
Fell, hair, and wool which the beasts do bear

I nourish and preserve, which ye do wear,  
 Which if ye had not, no doubt ye should  
 Starve for lack of clothes because of cold.  
 So both you should die, or live in necessity,  
 If ye had not comfort and helpe of me.  
 And as for your fine cloth and costly array,  
 I cannot see why ye ought or may  
 Call yourself noble because ye wear it,  
 Which was made by other men's labour and  
 wit;  
 And also your delicate drinks and viand  
 By other men's labour be made so pleasant.  
 Therefore, Master Merchant, now to you I say  
 I cannot see but I am able and may  
 Live without you or your purveyance,

[A.v.r.]

For of food and cloth I have sufficience  
 Of myself for living necessary.  
 And now, Sir Knight, to you I say plainly,  
 I see not that ye can anything do  
 For the common weal, or ought longing  
 thereto;  
 But each man, being in authority,  
 Having wit may do it as well as ye.  
 Therefore to speak now of necessity,  
 There is neither of you both, but ye be  
 In more need than I; therefore I say plain  
 I am more noble than either of you twain.

[Mer.] Now that is a foolish reason, so God  
 me save,  
 For by the same reason thou wouldest have  
 Every beast, fish, and other fowl then  
 To be more noble of birth than a man.  
 For man hath more need of bodily covering  
 Than they have, for they need nothing;  
 The beasts have hair, and also a thick skin,

The fish scales or shells to keep their bodies in,  
The fowls feathers, and so everything  
By nature hath his proper covering,  
Save man himself, which is born all naked,  
And therefore he should be then most wretched.

*Plough.* Marry, no man can make a better reason,

For that is a sure and true conclusion;  
For if a child when he is first born  
Were not helped and covered, he were soon lorn;

He hath no strength to help him never a dell,  
Yet beasts have power to help themselves well.  
So, considering man's body in deed,  
A beast is more noble and man more wretched,  
Because he hath need of many more things  
Than beasts have to help of their livings.

Also, man must daily labour and sweat  
To get him full sustenance, as drink and meat,  
The ground he must dig and the beasts kill  
For bread and meat his body to fill,  
Grapes, fruits, and herbs nourish diligently  
To make good drinks to refresh his body.  
But all brute beasts have covering natural  
Sufficient to cover their bodies withal,  
And find their food ever on the ground ready,  
Without any pain, labour, or study.

[A.v.v.]

So every man, by reason of his body,  
Is more wretched and in more misery  
Than beasts be. Yet this notwithstanding,  
Man is most noble of creatures living,  
Not by his body, for that is impotent,  
But by his soul being so excellent;  
For by reason of his soul intellective  
He subdueth all other beasts alive,

And compelleth all other beasts that be  
 By his wit to relieve his necessity.  
 But beasts have no wit themselves to defend,  
 Nor can get no more than God hath them send.  
 For take any beast that weareth hair,  
 And do clip it off bare against winter;  
 That beast hath no manner of policy  
 To get other covering for his body  
 Of cloth nor skins, nor hath no wit  
 To put it upon him though one have made it,  
 Nor can build no house nor kindle no fire  
 To warm his body if need should require.  
 But yet a man hath wit and understanding  
 For to help himself in every such thing;  
 So man for his soul intellectual  
 Is most noble creature of beasts all.

*Mer.* That is a very good and pregnant  
 reason.

Yet methinketh thou makest a digression  
 From the argument that we first began,  
 Which was to prove who was most gentleman,  
 Which we disputed; I would thou haddest  
 heard it. [whit.

*Plough.* Tush! I heard what ye said every  
*Knight.* Then shew thy reason therein ere  
 thou go.

*Plough.* Nay, by God, I have somewhat  
 else to do.

I must go buy me a ha'porth of grease  
 The spokes of my cart therewith to dress.  
 Trow ye that I will leave my business  
 For your babbling pomp and foolishness?  
 Nay, by St. Mary, I will not do so,  
 For I can now to the market go  
 And for an halfpenny as much grease buy  
 As shall cost me in our town a penny;

And I tell thee plainly, without any boast,  
A halfpenny is as well saved as lost.

*Mer.* Straw for an halfpenny ! therein is no  
waste ;

Tarry with us awhile ; perhaps thou mayest

[A.vi.r.]

By our acquaintance now here get more  
Than thou gatest with thy cart this month  
before.

*Plough.* Straw for thy counsel ! turd a fart !  
Trowest I will give up my plough or cart  
And follow thy foolish appetite and mind ?  
Nay, I am not yet so mad nor so blind !  
For when I am at my cart or plough  
I am more merrier than either of you.  
I would not change my life nor my living  
For to be made a great lord or a king.  
There is no joy nor pleasure in this world here  
But hyll belly fill and make good cheer,  
Be it prince, lord, gentleman, or knave,  
It is all the joy that here he can have.  
But these covetous and ambitious wretches,  
They set their minds in honour and riches  
So much that they be never content,  
So they live ever in pain and torment.  
But a man that can this means find  
To have food and cloth and a merry mind,  
And to desire no more than is needful, *f. me &*  
That is in this world the life most joyful,  
Which life in this world no man shall acquire  
Till he subdue his insatiable desire.

*Mer.* I see well thou hast a cursed apish  
wit.

Then if thou wilt depart, I pray thee yet  
Come again when thy business is done.

*Plough.* For what intent, now, should I do so? [proceed,

*Mer.* For we will in our old argument Who should be called a gentleman indeed, And we would be glad to hear thy reason.

*Plough.* I will come again upon a condition, That ye will wait upon me both twain, And be not out of the way when I come again.

*Knight.* We will not be far hence.

*Plough.* Then I will not fail. [quail.

*Mer.* Then I pray thee let not thy promise

*Plough.* Lo, here is my finger; now trust me well,

I will come again if I have my hele;  
For, by God, I promise you one thing—  
I am as true of my word as the king.

But if I find you not here, then by my troth  
I shall call you openly false knaves both.

*Mer.* Thou shalt find us true in everything.

*Plough.* I think so; except lying and stealing. [A.vi.v.

*Knight.* Then farewell for a season; adieu!—

[*Plough.*] Then fare ye well both, I dare say as true

As some that be tied in Newgate.

*Mer.* Well, now he is gone, God speed well his gate;

But what shall we do now the mean season?

*Knight.* Let us take now some recreation, And come again here and keep our 'pointment.

*Mer.* Now thereto I am right well content, And in the meanwhile, good Lord of thy Grace Preserve all the people here in this place.

Amen.

*Finis Primæ Partis.*

## SECUNDA PARS.

*The Ploughman.* Here may I walk and  
wander to and fro,

But I see not them which I would speak to.

*Mer.* Yes, by rood, here we be both twain  
To whom thou didst promise to meet here  
again

To dispute the question that we began,  
Which of us could prove him most gentleman.

*Knight.* Thou saidest thou heardest our  
arguments all.

*Plough.* So did I, neither good nor sub-  
stantial,

For thy foolish and peevish opinion  
Was, because of the great dominion  
Of the lands and rents whereto thou wast born,  
Which thine ancestors had long time before,  
Thou thinkest thyself a gentleman to be.

And that is a foolish reason seemeth me,  
For when Adam delved and Eve span,  
Who was then a gentleman?

But then came the churl and gatherèd good,  
And there began first the gentle blood;  
And I think verily ye do believe

That we came all of Adam and Eve.  
Then to speak by reason; great possessions  
Make no gentleman, but gentle conditions.  
That is the cause and the best reason why  
One should be called a gentleman truly.

And furthermore mark well this reason then,—  
If a man's ancestors have been gentlemen,  
And virtuous and good to common weal,  
That ought to be reported never adell  
To the praise of the child which doth refuse

[B.i.r.]

Such good conditions and the contrary use;  
 But he ought to be dispraised the more  
 Because his ancestors have showed him be-  
 fore

A precedent of gentleness and virtue,  
 Which good example he doth not ensue,  
 For the gentleness of his blood cle[a]r[1]y  
 In him doth decay and utterly die;  
 So he that useth ~~conditions~~ virtuous,  
 Though that his ancestors were vicious,  
 Ought not to be dispraised therefor,  
 But ought to be honoured and praised the  
 more.

*Knight.* Yet methinketh more honour  
 should be given  
 To him which is of noble blood and kin.

*Plough.* Then if thou wilt look honoured to  
 be

Because of thy blood, then mark well and see  
 The vilest beggar that goeth by the door.  
 Had ye not both one God and creator?  
 Ye came of one first stock and progeny,  
 Both of Adam and Eve, ye will not deny;  
 The beggar and thou were both, doubtless,  
 Conceived and born in filth and uncleanness.  
 Thy blood and the beggar's of one colour be,  
 Thou art as apt to take sickness as he;  
 If thou be in the body wounded  
 Thy flesh is as ill as his to be healed.  
 Alas! I have known many or this  
 So proud of their birth that all their lives  
 Would give them to no labour nor learning,  
 Which brought them to miserable ending,  
 That in poverty wretchedly did die, [high.  
 Or fallen to theft and hanged therefor full

So I say virtue and good conditions, then,  
 Is that which maketh the very gentleman;  
 And though the father may bequeath to the  
 son

His riches, his land, and his possession,  
 Yet may he neither give nor bequeath  
 Unto him in no wise after his death  
 His virtue nor his gentle conditions.

They cannot descend as other possessions,  
 And if thou wilt be a gentleman, needs  
 Thou must then use virtue and gentle deeds.

*Knight.* Why desire men, then, praise  
 evermore

Of the acts of their ancestors done before?

*Plough.* One cause thereof is for lack of  
 learning; [B.i.v.]

They perceive not the reason of the thing.  
 Another is because there be many,  
 That call themselves gentlemen, unworthy,  
 Which live voluptuously and bestial,  
 And do no good in the world at all,  
 But live in pride, sloth, and unthriftiness;  
 And because they have no manner goodness,  
 Nor property nor virtue in them whereby  
 Any man should think them any praiseworthy,  
 Therefore they seek for commendation  
 Of the acts that their ancestors have done.

*Mer.* Then I marvel men desire to be  
 called

Of the blood of them that excelled  
 In worldly honour, as kings and emperors,  
 Where some were tyrants, some were con-  
 querors,  
 And few desire to be called of their blood  
 Which have been called just men, virtuous and  
 good,

And used indifferent justice and equity,  
Meekness, abstinence, or wilful poverty.

*Plough.* If I should tell thee the very cause  
true,  
It is because they love no such virtue,  
Which virtue and gentle conditions should be  
'Longing to gentlemen of property.

*Knight.* If gentle conditions be the cause,  
lo,

Then will I compare with both you two;  
For I have ever used gentle manner,  
And so have mine ancestors that before were.  
For first of all, when this world began,  
Long after there were but few people then,  
Men had sufficient of everything,  
Without great labour, for food and clothing;  
All thing was in common among them, doubtless;

But afterward, when people did increase,  
Each man, to increase his pleasure and  
volupte,

Of goods and lands desired property,  
Whereof great strife and debate did arise.

Then such as mine ancestors were that were  
wise

Did study to make laws how the people might  
be

Living together in peace and unity,  
And against enemies alway defended  
The people that tilled the ground and laboured.  
The people, perceiving then their goodness,  
Their great wit, discretion, and gentleness,  
Were content to give them part of the profit

[B.ii.7.]  
Coming of their lands, which they did get,  
As corn, cattle, and such things as they won.

But after, when that coin of money began,  
They changed those revenues, and were content

To give them in money an annual rent.

So for their good and virtuous conditions

They came first to lands and possessions;

So possessions began, and were first found

Upon a good and reasonable ground.

*Plough.* By Gogg's sweet body, thou liest falsely;

All possessions began first of tyranny.

For when people began first to increase,

Some gave themselves all to idleness,

And would not labour, but take by violence

That other men gat by labour and diligence.

Then they that laboured were fain to give

Them part of their gettings in peace to live,

Or else for their lands, money a portion;

So possession begun by extortion,

And when such extortioners had oppressed

The labouring people, then they ordained,

And made laws marvellous strait and hard,

That their heirs might enjoy it afterward.

So the law of inheritance was first begun,

Which is a thing against all good reason

That any inheritance in the world should be.

*Knight.* That is a shameful opinion, seemeth me,

For when I have laboured and by great study

Got and purchased lands truly,

It is good reason that I have liberty

To give those lands to whom it liketh me,

Or else to let them descend lineally

To my child or cousin of my blood most nigh.

For inheritance must needs be a good thing,

Because so much good thereof is proceeding.

Every man to his blood such love doth bear,  
 Because the land shall descend to his heir,  
 He will build thereon, and the land improve,  
 And make corn and grass to increase and grow,  
 Graft fruit, set trees, and nourish timber,  
 And to increase fish, make ponds with water,  
 Stock bushes, weed weeds which destroy herb-  
 age,  
 And all barren ground bring to tillage,  
 And amend the highways that be there about,

[B.ii.v.]

And do many other good deeds, no doubt,  
 For the profit of his heirs that shall be,  
 And for the common wealth of his country,  
 Which things surely he would never intend  
 If the land should not to his heir descend.

*Plough.* By thy reason no other thing is  
 meant

But a good deed upon an evil intent;  
 When men for love or pride do such good deeds  
 The devil therefor shall quit them their  
 meeds.

*Knight.* Whether God or the devil quit  
 them therefor

Is now to our purpose never the more,  
 For their minds and intents no man can tell.  
 But touching inheritance, this I wot well,  
 Much good cometh thereof and daily doth  
 grow.

*Plough.* Nay, much ill cometh thereof, I  
 shall prove how,

For these men that be of great possessions  
 Unto their blood have such affections,  
 If any land like them that lieth nigh them  
 Of their poor neighbours, they will destroy  
 them,

Or by extort means they will them compel  
 The land for half the money worth to sell.  
 And when they take money they will alway  
 Ever borrow and never willing to pay ;  
 And when they shall die ye see the experience,  
 Few of them have remorse of conscience  
 To make any manner of restitution  
 Of any land so wrongfully gotten.

*Knight.* Thou hast spoke sore against  
 gentlemen ;

But what sayest thou of merchants, then ?

*Plough.* Many be good and worshipful also,  
 And many charitable deeds they do,  
 Build churches, and amend the highways,  
 Make almshouses and help many decays ;  
 But some be covetous and full falsely  
 Get their goods by deceit and usury,  
 And when they have a thousand pounds in their  
 coffers

They will rather suffer their neighbours  
 To starve for hunger and cold and to die  
 Or they will give to help them a penny ;  
 And yet moreover when any of them be  
 Promoted to rule or authority,  
 They disdain all learning, law, and reason,  
 And judge all by will and affection.

*Mer.* Thou art but a railer to speak so sore  
 [B.iii.1.]

Against gentlemen and merchants evermore.  
 Be not ploughmen and others that drive the  
 cart,  
 And such rusticall fellows as thou art,  
 False shrews, and live as viciously also  
 As gentlemen of lands and merchants do ?

*Knight.* Yes, these villain carters, almost  
 each one

Have neither conscience nor devotion,  
 For bribe and steal and everything they will  
 If they may secretly come thereuntil;  
 And as for prayer and divine service,  
 They love them in no manner wise,  
 Nor never wolde labour nor work do  
 If need of living drove them not thereto.

*Plough.* Yet gentlemen and the rich merchants that be

Use much more vice and iniquity.

*Mer.* Why thinkest thou all merchants and gentlemen nought? [thought;

*Plough.* Nay, I say not so; that is not my I am not yet so foolish or so mad, For I know many good, though some be bad; Yet some will suffer his debts unpaid to be, And die and jeopard his soul rather than he Will any of his lands minish and impair That should after his death come to his heir; And some of them so proud be of their blood, And use small virtue and do little good, But give all their minds and their study To oppress the poor people by tyranny; And some of them think this for a surety Is the most honour to them that can be, To be able for to do extortion And to maintain it without.

*Knight.* By Gog's sweet body, thou art a stark knave,

Noblemen and gentlemen thus to deprave.

*Plough.* What, thou proud whoreson fool, whom dost thou knave?

I trow thou wouldest a good blow or two have With a good whipstock, to teach thee courtesy.

*Knight.* Avaunt, beggarly knave, I thee defy!

*Plough.* What ! will thou wage battle by  
and by now ?

That shall I prove straight, I make God avow.  
*Et hic verberat eos.*

*Mer.* Keep the peace, masters ! hold your  
hands, for shame !

To make this business ye be greatly to blame ;  
Ye will disturb all this whole company.

*Plough.* Nay, marry, it is a cause to make  
them merry ; [B.iii.v.]

To walk such a proud fool is but sport and  
game.

*Knight.* By cock's body, were not for worldly  
shame [blood.]

I should cut thy flesh, or else see thy heart's

*Mer.* Sir, hold your tongue ; your words be  
nothing good ;

We lose here, with this lewd altercation,  
Much good pastime and recreation.

*Plough.* Why, what better pastime here  
canst thou have

Than to hear one to call another knave,  
And see such a proud fool walked with a whip ?

*Mer.* But I love it not ; therefore of fellow-  
ship

Leave this brabbling and with good argument  
Try the matter that is most convenient.

*Plough.* Nay, I will try it howsoever he will ;  
Be it with words or deeds, I will answer him  
still ;

For by God, if he will not be content  
To be concluded by good argument,  
I will conclude him one way or that I go,  
Or I shall prove it on his pate, that shall I do.

*Knight.* Thou speakest like a clerk that hath  
little wit ;

When a case is put if he cannot soil it  
 By no manner reason that he can lay,  
 Then will he answer him this wise and say,  
 " Beware what ye say, sir ; now I advise you ;  
 For it is treason or heresy to speak now,"  
 To the intent to rebuke him openly  
 Before the unlearned people that stand thereby ;  
 And if he can no colour of such thing find,  
 Then will he vex and chafe in his mind,  
 And cast out some lewd words of quarrelling  
 To turn the whole matter to chiding and fight-  
 ing ;

And so dost thou now, like one that were mad.

*Plough.* Nay, I would thou knewest, thou  
 foolish lad,

I am neither mad nor drunken yet ;  
 For my opinion, I have well proved it  
 By substantial reason and argument  
 That inheritance is not convenient,  
 And showed better reasons than thou canst do.

*Knight.* Nay, thy reasons may soon be an-  
 swered unto ;  
 For God defend that estates of inheritance  
 Should be destroyed, for by that good ordin-  
 ance

Gentlemen of lands undoubtedly  
 Bring up their children full honourably ;  
 Some put to the school to learn cunning,  
 To instruct the people in virtuous living ;

[B.iv.r.]

Some made to be active in martial deeds,  
 Able to defend the land when need is ;  
 And the rustical people that have no land  
 Such things be not able to take in hand.  
 Wherefore if we should destroy inheritance  
 We should destroy all good rule and ordinance

*Plough.* But such men as have great rents  
and lands,

And no estate but term of their lives,  
And everything thereon will nourish and save  
For the great zeal and love that they only have  
To the common wealth of their country;  
And for God's sake, lo! these people be they  
That be worthy to have possessions,  
And such people of virtuous conditions,  
And no other, should be chosen governors,  
And they should have lands to maintain their  
honours,  
Term of their lives as long as they take pain,  
For the common wealth this is good reason  
plain.

So that no man ought to have any land  
But such as be apt and have charge in hand  
For the common wealth, as princes and rulers,  
Bishops, curates, preachers, and teachers,  
Judges, ministers, and other officers  
That of the commonwealth be executors,  
And valiant men of the chivalry  
That be bound to defend the people daily,  
Such men as be apt to all such things  
Should have lands to maintain their livings.  
So inheritance is not beseeming  
To let them have lands that can do no such  
thing;

Nor I think it not reasonable neither  
One man to live by labour of another,  
For each man is born to labour truly,  
As a bird is born to fly naturally.  
Nor a man ought not to have such liberty  
To leave lands to his child whereby that he  
Shall lust for to live in sloth and gluttony,  
Compelled to do nought but live voluptuously.

*Mer.* There is always good remedy for that,  
 That is, to compel them to do somewhat,  
 So that each man having inheritance  
 Have some authority and governance,  
 Wherein he should take pain and business,  
 To constrain him to eschew idleness.

[B.iv.v.]

*Plough.* Then this great mischief should follow of it,  
 Ofttimes they should rule that have little wit,  
 Or disposed to be proud and covetous,  
 Or to live after their lusts voluptuous ;  
 Which if such men had authority  
 Many things no doubt misordered should be.  
 Where justice should be, there would be  
 tyranny ;  
 Where peace should be, war, debate, and envy.  
 So there is no good reason that I can see  
 To prove that any inheritance should be.

*Knight.* Yes, that shall I prove by good authority, [see  
 For read in the Bible, and thou shall therein  
 God said to Abraham, “ *Tibi dabo*  
*Terram hanc et semine tuo.* ”]  
 Which is as much as to say, to expound it  
 true,  
 I shall give this land to thee and thine issue.  
 Here is a good proof that it was God’s will  
 That Abraham and his blood should continue  
 still  
 As possessioners, and have the governance  
 Of that land as their proper inheritance.

*Plough.* Thou answerest me now even like  
 a fool,  
 As some of these fond clerks that go to school ;  
 When one putteth to them a subtle question

Of philosophy to be proved by reason,  
 When they have all their wits, and reason spend,  
 And cannot tell how their part to defend,  
 Then they will allege some authority  
 Of the laws or else of divinity,  
 Which in no wise men may deny.  
 And yet ye know well that of philosophy  
 The principles oft contrariant be  
 Unto the very ground of divinity;  
 For the philosophers agree hereunto  
*Quod mundus fuit semper ab eterno,*  
 And divines *Quod in principio omnium*  
*Creavit Deus terram et cælum.*  
 But thou didst promise openly even now  
 Only by natural reason to prove how  
 That inheritance ought for to be had.

*Mer.* By Gog's body, sirs, I hold you both  
 mad!

Ye be like some women that I know well.  
 When they would any matter unto a man tell,  
 They will tell twenty tales by the way,  
 Nothing to purpose to the matter that they

[C.i.r.]

Did first intend to tell and declare;  
 And in like manner now both ye do fare.  
 For ye dispute now whether inheritance  
 Be a reasonable thing or a good ordinance,  
 Which is a matter nothing pertaining  
 To the question moved at the beginning;  
 For the question was which of us all three  
 Could prove himself most gentleman to be.

*Knight.* As touching that we have all spoke  
 and said

Each man for his part as much as can be laid.

*Plough.* Nay, I have yet reasons left where-  
 by I can

*Prove myself of us all most gentleman,  
That neither of you both can void by reason.*

*Mer.* If thou have ought else to say, now speak on.

*Plough.* Then to you both; answer me this short clause,—

Is not gentle conditions the most principal cause

To make one to be a gentleman?

*Knight.* Peradventure it may be so; what then?

*Plough.* Peradventure, quotha?

Nay, I shall prove that by examples many one;  
For music maketh one a musician,  
Grammar to be a good grammarian,  
And also geometry a good geometrician,  
And churlish conditions a churl for to be,  
And so of every other state and degree;  
And where gentle conditions be, doubtless  
In any person there is gentleness.

Then as virtue maketh a good man,  
So gentle conditions a gentleman.

*Mer.* All those points I think must needs granted be;

What arguest more thereof forth let us see.

*Plough.* How sayest then to pride, wrath, and envy?

*Knight.* They be nought and evil, I think verily.

*Plough.* What is meekness, patience, and charity?

*Knight.* Every one a gentle and good property.

*Plough.* What is covetise and liberality?

*Knight.* The first good, the other nought—  
for surety.

*Plough.* What is gluttony, sloth, and lechery?

*Knight.* They be nought all; who can that deny?

*Plough.* What abstinence, good business, and chastity?

*Knight.* Virtuous and gentle properties they be.

*Plough.* Since ye have granted this, I shall prove plain

I am a gentleman; so is none of you twain.

First, for pride your raiment sheweth what ye be;

[C.i.v.]

For ye will never be content except that ye  
 Have the finest cloth and silk for to wear  
 Of orient colours, and all your gear  
 So costly, your houses gilt gloriously,  
 As though ye would therein yourselves deify.  
 Ye covet evermore goods, lands, and rent;  
 Whatsoever ye get, yet never content;  
 Wrathful, ye be moved to anger anon,  
 And envious, disdaining every man.  
 And as for me, I am content alway  
 With a poor cottage and simple array;  
 I disdain no man, and yet patiently  
 Can suffer to be called knave, and not angry.  
 Sometime I call him knave again in haste,  
 And when I have said, my anger is past.  
 Ye have your beds so pleasant and soft,  
 Wherin ye ease yourselves too long and too oft,  
 Which maketh your bodies so tender to be  
 That ye cannot endure labour like me.  
 With no manner of coarse food ye will be fed,

But with pleasant wines and most whitest  
bread,  
With flesh and fish most delicate and fat,  
All fruits and spices that can be gat;  
And when ye have had such pleasant refection,  
To assuage your carnal insurrections,  
Whatsoever she be, wife, widow, or maid,  
If she come in the way, she shall be essayed.

*Mer.* Thou liest, slanderous churl, for I  
think of troth

Thou usest such vice more than we both.

*Plough.* Nay, by Cock's body, I use no such  
life,

For I am content with black Maud, my wife;  
Trow ye that I care for these nice proud [prinns],  
These painted popagays that hold up their  
chins,

And look so smoterly as who say they would  
Have every man woo them that doth them be-  
hold?

Tut, man! for all such venereal work  
As good is the foul as the fair in the dark.

*Knight.* Thou sayest true; draf is good  
enough for swine.

*Plough.* Yet thou answerest to no reason  
of mine.

*Knight.* Thy reasons all right well answer  
I can,

For I say it becometh a noble man  
To have rich apparel and clothing,  
And goodly houses of costly building,  
And that each man, according to his degree,

[C.ii.r.]

Be known from other and what they be.  
For if such costly things were not made,  
Work for poor people could never be had,

And many folks then should fail to idleness,  
Which is the mother of vice and wretchedness.

*Plough.* Yea, but I delight no such vanities  
worldly,

I delight neither in sloth nor gluttony;  
I dig and delve; I labour for my living,  
Never idle, but somewhat ever doing;  
Daily I run and go bare, sweat and swink;  
I eat brown bread and drink small drink,  
Content with coarse meat, whatsoever it be,  
So it quench the hunger, it sufficeth me.  
These points I use, which I have rehearsèd  
now,

Be not these gentle conditions, I pray you?

*Mer.* If thou use them, need compelleth thee  
thereto, [wise do.

For if thou couldest, hardly thou would other-

*Plough.* What I would do then ye cannot  
tell.

It is not to purpose, but this I wot well;  
Since that I use my life in such good manner,  
With such gentle conditions expressèd here,  
More than ye both do still continuing;  
And since that gentle conditions is the thing  
To make a gentleman the cause principal,  
Wherein I use my life most of us all,  
Who can by any reason deny, then,  
But that I am of us all most gentleman?

*Knight.* In faith, if thou be gentleman there-  
for,

Thou art a gentleman against thy will, full sure.

*Mer.* Since I see he standeth in his own con-  
ceit so well,

That opinion we shall never expel  
From him by no argument or reason;  
Therefore now for a little season

Let us depart from him; I hold it best;  
Then we shall have with him some rest.

*Knight.* I agree thereto, for Caton sayeth  
this,—

*Contra verbosas noli contendere verbis;*  
Contend nor argue never in no matter  
With him that is full of words and clatter.

*Mer.* Therefore a season let us both depart.

*Knight.* I am agreed thereto with all mine  
heart.

*Plough.* Why, sirs, then will ye depart and  
begone? [season,

*Mer.* Yea, that we will; farewell for a  
For to tarry here longer we see no great cause.

[*Et exeunt.*

[C.ii.v.]

*Plough.* Then fare ye well, as wise as two  
daws, [twain

And I pray God send you such grace both  
To be stark cuckolds or ye come again.

Now, masters [*the ploughman addresses him-  
self to the audience*], they be both gone  
away,

Therefore one word; now hark what I say.

We see well now by plain experience,  
When a man is set in a wilful credence  
All to fortify his own opinion,

If God himself then would with him reason,  
In effect it shall no more avail

Than with a whip to drive a snail.

Therefore no remedy is that I can see  
For evil men that be in authority,

But let them alone till God will send  
A time till our governors may intend

Of all enormities the reformation,

And bring in their hands the rod of correction,

And the reforming of injuries themselves see,  
 And will say precisely, Thus it shall be.  
 For exhortations, teaching, and preaching,  
 Jesting and railing, they mend no thing,  
 For the amendment of the world is not in me,  
 Nor all the great arguments that we three  
 Have made since we reasoned here together  
 Do not prevail the weight of a feather  
 For the helping of anything that is amiss.  
 We cannot help it then, since it so is.  
 I will let the world wag, and home I will go,  
 And drive the plough as I was wont to do,  
 And pray God send us peace. I will no far mell;  
 Therefore, masters all, now fare ye well.

*Hic Miles et Mercator iterum entrant.*

*Knight.* Now, by my troth, I am glad that  
 he is gone.

*Mer.* And so am I, by sweet St. John.

I heard not a churl this seven year  
 Show such curst reasons as he hath done here  
 For the maintenance of his opinion.  
 Yet he is deceived for all his reason;  
 For it is necessary that rulers be,  
 To have possessions to maintain their degree,  
 And those few to drive the multitude all  
 Of the other people to labour to fall;  
 For if the rulers drove them not thereto,  
 The people would be idle and nothing do.

[C.iii.r.]

[*Knight.*] And most reason is that govern-  
 ance

Should come to such rulers by inheritance,  
 Rather than to have them choose by election,  
 Ofttimes by dread, meed, and affection  
 Men of evil conscience that great tyrants be;  
 Read old chronicles, the proof ye shall see.

And though they have great wit and learning,  
 Yet so proud they be thereof they fear nothing,  
 Neither God nor man, but evermore still  
 Without counsel or advice follow their own  
 will.

But they that by inheritance rulers be,  
 Though they have no great learning, yet we see  
 Yet maketh them more fearful and better con-  
 tent

To follow wise men's counsel and advisement;  
 And since that it hath been so long continued  
 Inheritors to have rule and so long used,  
 And that they have ruled by as discretion  
 As the other that have been chosen by election,  
 If that order of rule by succession of blood  
 Should be destroyed, it should do hurt and no  
 good.

[debar;

*Mer.* That reason is so great no man can  
 Nevertheless that churlish knave, that carter,  
 After his fond opinion thinketh thus  
 Himself more gentleman than us.

*Knight.* And therein he lieth, for by experi-  
 ence we see

That gentle conditions most commonly be  
 In them that be of noble blood born [before  
 For take twenty carters, which never were  
 Acquainted, let them be together; [manner;  
 Take twenty strange gentlemen in like  
 These churlish carters, I dare well say,  
 Will not agree together scant one day  
 Without chiding, quarrelling, or fighting;  
 Each one will steal from other, and be picking,  
 And strive which of them at the scot shall pay  
 least,

[best.

And endeavour them who can play the knave  
 But these gentlemen, I warrant you, will study

Who can show to other most courtesy,  
 And of their gentleness will prefer to pay  
 For the other, and show what pleasures they  
 may.

So touching gentleness I say surely  
 Men of great birth use it most commonly.

*Mer.* There can be no truer saying nor  
 sentence,  
 And the cause thereof we see by experience;

[C.iii.v.]  
 For these poor wretches that have nothing,  
 Must be niggards, churlish, and sparing.  
 But gentlemen be taught to be liberal,  
 And so they may be, for they have the where-  
 withal.

*Knight.* And as touching nobleness, that  
 argument [dent  
 Which the plotighman made late proveth evi-  
 That gentlemen born to land must needs be  
 For sufficiency of most nobility.  
 For beside God's gifts of grace and of nature,  
 As wit and bodily strength, yet they be sure  
 Of other riches, as of land and rent,  
 To avoid need, so they be more sufficient  
 Of themselves than other poor people doubtless,  
 Than if need to strange help cause wretched-  
 ness  
 And suffisance because wretchedness.

*Mer.* A better reason no man can devise;  
 And yet farther I think likewise  
 He that hath great abundance of riches  
 May use liberality and gentleness;  
 And also it is ever necessary  
 That some live in wealth and some in misery;  
 And let churls babble and say what they will,  
 It hath been so ever and will be so still.

For it is Almighty God's purveyance  
 Wise men of fools to have the governance ;  
 And they that rule well I beseech Jesu,  
 Send them good life and long to continue.

Amen.

### THE PHILOSOPHER.

Ye sovereigns all discreet and excellent,  
 Before whom this dialogue showed hath been,  
 Touching three points by way of argument,  
 First, what is gentleness and what nobility,  
 And who should be chose to high authority.  
 These questions they be so high and subtle  
 Few dare presume to define them well.

[C.iv.7.]

Yet I think now, under your corrections,  
 The thing that maketh a gentleman to be  
 Is but virtue and gentle conditions,  
 Which as well in poor men oftentimes we see  
 As in men of great birth or high degree ;  
 And also vicious and churlish conditions  
 May be in men born to great possessions.  
 And further, as touching nobility,  
 Yet standeth much part I think doubtless  
 In sufficiency reason doth agree ;  
 But that suffisance making nobleness  
 Must needs be annexèd unto goodness ;  
 For suffisance is not the cause principal  
 That God is noble, but his goodness  
 withal.

So virtue is ever the thing principal  
 That gentleness and nobleness doth ensue ;  
 Then these head rulers and governors all  
 Should come thereto because of their virtue,

And in authority they ought not continue,  
 Except they be good men, discreet and wise,  
 And have a love and zeal unto justice.

Wherfore, sovereigns, all that here present be,  
 Now mark well these reasons here brought in  
 Both against men of high and of low degree,  
 For this intent only, to rebuke sin;  
 For the best way that is for one to begin,  
 To convert the people by exhortation  
 Is to persuade them by natural reason.  
 For when that a man by his own reason  
 Judgeth himself for to offend,  
 That grudgeth his conscience and giveth  
 compunction  
 Into his heart to cause him amend,  
 But such blind beasts that will not intend  
 To hear no good counsel nor reason  
 Ought by the law to have sharp correction.  
 But then if the laws be not sufficient,  
 Which have been made and ordained before,  
 To give therefor condign punishment,  
 The princes and governors be bound ever-  
 more  
 To cause new laws to be made therefor,  
 And to put such men in authority  
 That good men just and indifferent be.  
 But because that men of nature evermore  
 Be frail and following sensuality,

[C.iv.v.]

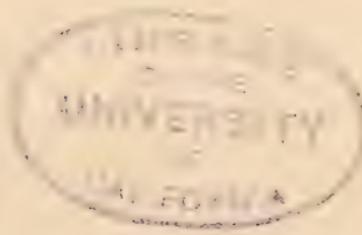
It is impossible in a manner therefore  
 For any governors that be in authority  
 At all times just and indifferent to be,  
 [E]xcept they be bridled and thereto com-  
 pellèd

By some strait laws for them devisèd.  
 As thus, that no man such room occupy

But certain years and then to be removed,  
 Yet that while bound to attend diligently,  
 And if he offend and surely proved,  
 Without any favour that he be punishèd ;  
 For the punishment of a judge or officer  
 Doth more good than of thousand other.  
 And until that such orders be devised  
 Substantially, and put in execution,  
 Look never to see the world amended,  
 Nor of the great mischiefs the reformation ;  
 But they that be bound to see the things  
 done  
 I pray God of his grace to put in their  
 mindys  
 To reform shortly such things amiss.  
 And though that I myself now percase  
 Thus mine opinion have publishèd,  
 Or any of my fellows here in this place  
 In any point here have us abusèd,  
 We beseech you to hold us excusèd ;  
 And so the author hereof requireth you all,  
 And thus I commit you to God eternal.

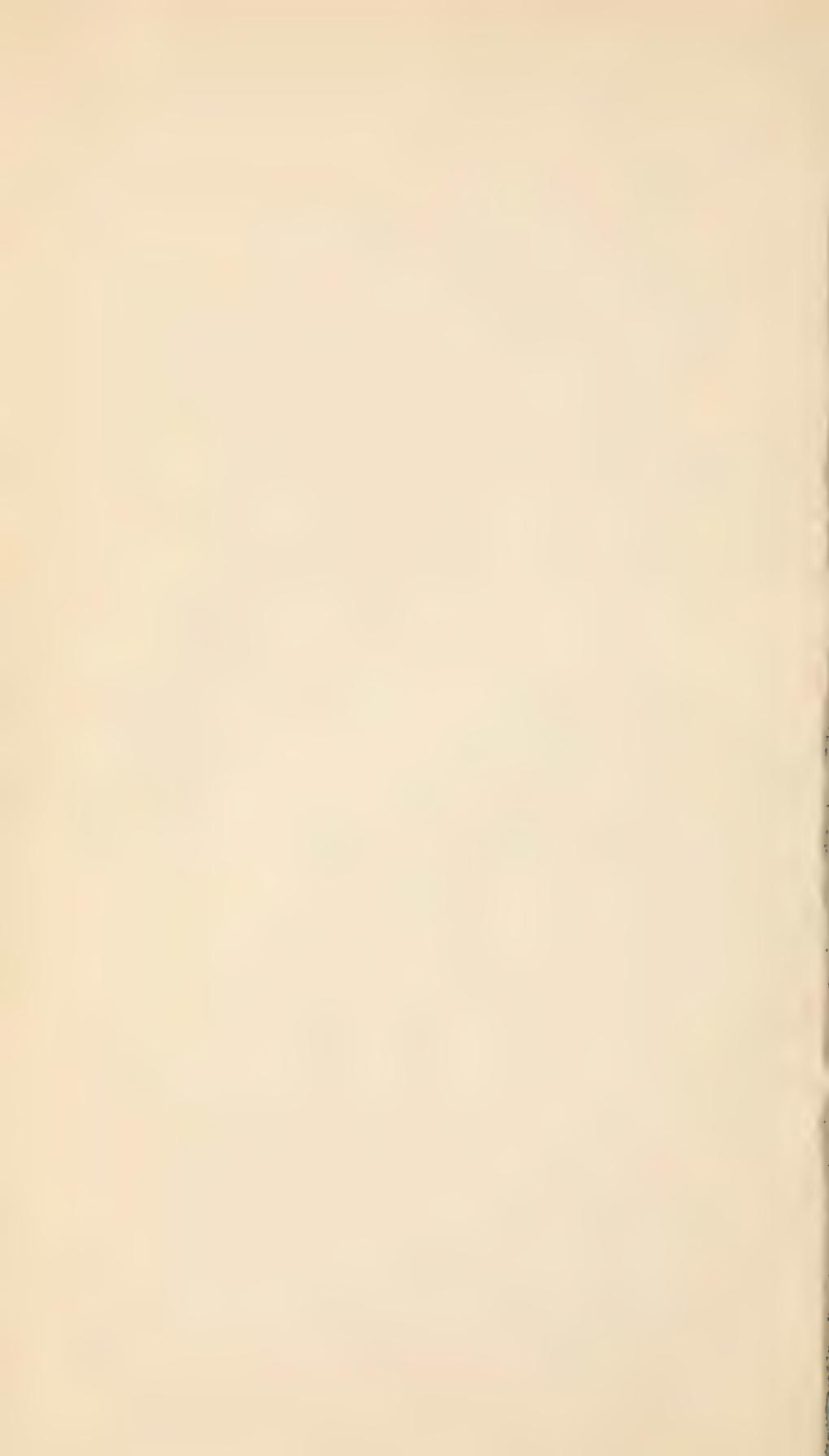
AMEN.

John Rastell me fieri fecit  
 Cum privilegio regali.



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